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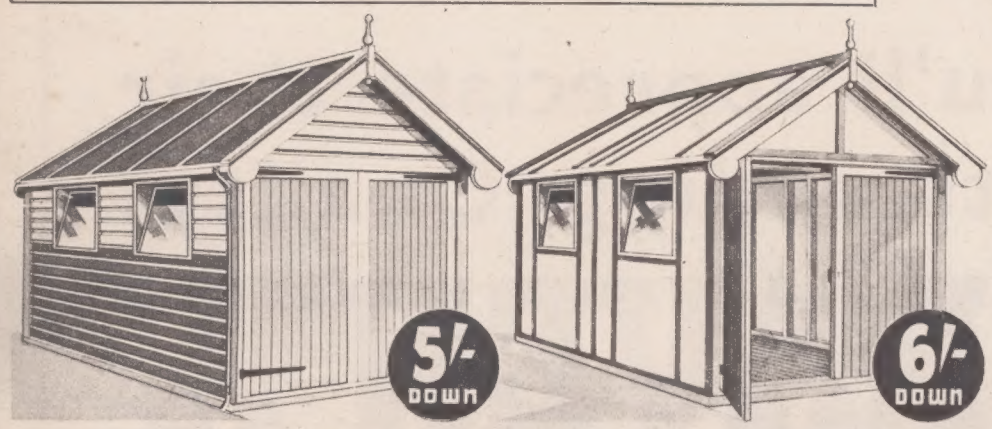

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"Good Evening Everybody— This is HENRY HALL.."

TWO minutes to go, and everyone in his place. Get this jacket off . . . put it there . . . where's that baton? Ah, good.

One minute, now. Rather too much noise. Give them a tap to stand by—*so*. Shouldn't be surprised if we go on a minute or two late this evening—sporting commentaries have a way of running over time. Wonder who won, anyway. . . .

Ten-fifteen by the studio clock, and no "stand-by" yet. One minute more and a number will have to come out. Won't have time for the full list, unless—ah! Arms up—what, isn't that violin tuned yet? Come along, brass, come along! All eyes . . . steady. . . .

There's the red light! *Now!*

". . . the time for dancing . . . lah, dah, dah, d-a-h——"—up, with it, trumpet, *up*—always have to catch his eye on that note—microphone arm looks rather low for me—might just knock something, stooping. . . .

Eight bars—four—two—*off!*

Lean over, quickly now.

"Good evening, everyone. This is Henry Hall speaking." Voice feels good enough to-night. "We begin this programme with a fox-trot . . ."

Surely, Miss Brooks—

Well, that's that. Feel better when the ice is broken. Always start with this kind of number in the evening—different type of listener from the day-time. Where's Vivienne—ah, good for you, Miss Brooks. She sings here. Why, surely she's not nervous—just the first number, perhaps—give her a smile. She's getting ready. Tone the brass down—strings ready——

Good. Hope the control man brought in that mike in good time. Better catch his eye—yes, he's watching through the panel. That's his "O.K." signal. Strange, you can generally see when his arms are stretched across the controls. Perhaps he swung in this mike with his left hand.

Hodges makes the next announcement. There he is—safe as houses. The vocalist? Ah, Elrick. Looks as though we're using all the vocalists this session—Donovan, Yarlett—yes, and Elizabeth Scott, Three Brothers, Three Sisters. . . .

Four more bars . . . "You're . . . in . . . my . . . *heart!*" All right, all yours, Mr. Hodges.

Slip this sheet away under there. Here we are, "Life Begins——"

Want the violins up near the mike for these eight bars—they know it. Two, four, six, eight—and down, quickly. It's time Elrick left those drums—nod to Dan to take over—good.

Can't hear a syllable. Slip into the listening room to make sure he's——yes, its straightforward for the next few lines. Quick, through the doors, up the steps.

Ah, that's better! Check up with the control man over that mike while I'm here.

"Did you get that mike 'in' in time for the first vocal, George? Yes, of course—all right."

Might have known he'd be all ready for it.

Back to the studio. Now, what's to be taken out. Must save time on something, running two minutes late. "Nagasaki?" No, the Three Brothers sing that. "Clap My Hands?" No, strikes a balance with the other thing. . . .

"How will it seem?" H'm. Yes, might take that out. All right, after the next one. My announcement.

What is it? Oh, yes—"Saddle." Clear the throat before going to the mike. Two more bars—*so*!—and——

"The next number to-night is the newest of the cowboy songs, 'Saddle your Blues to a Wild Mustang.' . . ."

Good tune, this. Must be careful to see they all get the "over-one" sign. Haven't had to alter anything for weeks; they might not be expecting it . . . to—a—wild—mus-tang——and—gallop your troubles—aw-a-a-y . . . awa-a-a-y . . . awa-a-a-y.

Hope that goes over well. Difficult to blend in the girls' voices at just the right moment. Think we got it this afternoon in rehearsal, though. All right, so long as they haven't——

Better wave Hodges back. He'll know I intend to change something then. Get to the mike, quickly.

"You are listening to the B.B.C. Dance Orchestra, directed by——" Now, they'll know by the finger upheld—yes, they're all turning over. Good. "Now we are going to play . . ."

Not much for the rest of us to do with this. Mostly Halsall's sax. solo. Might mention that over the air afterwards—he'd appreciate it, and people like to know.

Lovely few bars, these. Wonder what gave Spike the idea. . . . What was it Hodges said yesterday—"has the charm of an authentic folk song." True enough. And that brings us to "Because of You."

Hold them

Let me see, this is Dan's song. M' yes. Go to it, Donovan. Ah, he's signalling the control room to bring in the vocal mike, four bars—two—three—four—*now!*

"I'm just . . . a poor . . . ro-man-tic . . . fool . . . Losing . . ."

This session seems to have struck a fairly good balance, even with one tune out. Elizabeth announces next—she's at the mike already.

Get the brass well together this time. Must get that stab on the high C—hold them, now, hold them—and—*down*. That's grand. Now the viola solo—keep the brass right down for it. . . .

Good refrain to this—might become popular . . . *illusion* . . . *confusion* . . . three—four—only one that *mattered* . . . torn and *tattered*. . . .

Well, that's that. And so to——there's Hodges saying it. Watched him so often I can lip-read every word . . . "a new song by the writers of the well-known 'The Music Goes Round and Around'—they've called it, 'I'm Gonna Clap My Hands.'" There's Elrick—where are the lads who clap and whistle for him? Ah, here they come.

"I'm gonna clap my hands—"
Clap, clap.
"I'm gonna snap my fingers—"
Snap, snap.

Suppose no one knows what Elrick's handclap sounds like, so it doesn't matter whether he does it or not. Except that he's too close to the mike and there's not time to step back. . . .

Wonder whether this thing will be as popular as their other number. Must have gone round and around the world, that tune . . . *trumpet!*

(*continued overleaf*)

● In this article in the "THINKING ALOUD" series you have a vivid glimpse of the working of the mind behind the microphone. The popular director of the B.B.C. Dance Band is introduced by

J. Murray Smith

Swing them with me, smoothly, sweetly.

CONTINUING

Henry Hall Thinks Aloud . . .

Now for a lot of singing. Three Brothers and Three Sisters, together. Gives the boys a break for three minutes, at least. Might slip out and hear what they sound like.

Not bad at all, not bad. "A little bit independent . . . in your style . . ." Independent—yes, those darned garage people—wonder if they remembered to top the battery up. Car's been standing out there with the lights on every night this week—thought the starter seemed——hullo, get inside again, quick!

What's Elizabeth doing here? She's singing next. Better remind her.

"This is your number you know, Miss Scott. What? Yes, the next one—'If You Love Me.'"

Expect she's glad to get out of the listening room. Not amusing, sitting about waiting for your next turn. She's got her note of the announcement.

Now then, must get them all together after their rest. . . .

Where are the girls now? Ah, I see—and Marie's doing a spot of knitting again. She's always making things—never see her wearing them. Wonder where they go? . . .

Easy with the slow movement—three—four—lah—dah—not a bad arrangement, either. Down, now for the vocal. Has he switched the mikes over?—yes, yes, I know we used the other mike at rehearsal; I'm trusting you to jump to it, though—ah, good man.

How's the time?

Where's Elizabeth gone now? Ah, she's sitting over there—on my jacket! She's noticed I'm looking at her—and why! I should think so, too.

Now, the refrain. Dig at the first note . . . slur this bar—bur-r—like that . . . good team work in the clarinets. Now, the trombone—watch my eye, man—wait for it—good! He got it perfectly that time. Let's hope he does it again . . . on the next line . . . now, *now!*

Thank heaven! Fraction of a second out there ruins the whole effect. No wonder he's wiping his lips.

All right, Sandy—let's have that guitar—trum, ter-um—and now, Dicky—bring it up—*up*——Tricky break, that.

No, no, he's too loud. Catch his eye . . . frown . . . that's it, just in time.

In time! Yes, how *is* the time? One gets so engrossed—fourteen, no, thirteen and a half minutes to go. Four more numbers, three minutes each; one minute for announcements. That leaves a clear minute for the fade-out and "Next Time."

Should be all right. Have to watch it carefully, though.

Announce this one myself. Hold the baton well up so that all can see. Mustn't strike the viola. . . .

"Now follows a tune called, 'With All My Heart and Soul'. . ."

Is he ready for that trumpet solo? Yes, waiting, one eye this way. Bring all—down—to a point of sound—the trumpet, to the trumpet—*now*——

" . . . heart—and—soul . . . need—you——"

That's grand. Eleven minutes. Better see that Hodges is waiting at the other mike. Yes, he's there.

Wish he would turn this way—could tell exactly when he finished, then. Ah! He must have read my thoughts—he's grinning. Nod to him—that's it, get on with it quickly, George.

Heavens, where's my copy of "April Fools"—quick, where is it! Underneath, perhaps. No. Ah, there it is. Must have turned over two of them together. Phew!

If that isn't the most stupid thing . . . shouldn't care to conduct from memory—not a new one like that, anyway. Handling too many to memorise any of them—that makes the twelfth this week.

Let me see, there's a break somewhere here—here, now. Saxes—trombone—now swing to the strings . . . six . . . eight . . . and back.

Don't know whether it's warm in here. Probably not. Must be using more energy than usual—or perhaps losing that sheet for a moment made me feel warm. Eight minutes.

Here's one for the Three Brothers. Gives me a chance to relax for a moment. . . . Looks as though "Scrimpson" is going on somewhere after, by the dinner-jacket. What a nickname—"Scrimpson." Wonder how he got it? . . .

Just these two sheets, now. And this is the wood and string combination we rehearsed all the morning. They must get it right after that. Only if Don doesn't come in there, on that B, there's a terrible gap. Catch his eye—yes, he's looking now—mouth the letter.

"*B.*"

Good, he's smiling. So long as he remembers, he won't miss it. Just after the piano solo, there. Underline it again for safety.

Last line of this number, now. Hodges, ready. Announcement going over. Watch his lips. Baton up—and—*down!*

Must get the most out of this, after all our work. Beautiful tune, anyway. Worth troubling about. "A-lone . . . dah—dah—dah——"

The piano solo . . . two . . . four bars . . . eight . . . sixteen. . . .

Don's looking, and smiling. One, two and *three!* Good, very neatly on the 'B.' He can carry it, now, with just the right inclination towards the mike, the right shade of tone . . . hand twisted into the fifth position . . . mouth drawn down . . . plays well, that lad.

Gather the others together, now. Sweep the baton round and across and *through*. Swing them with me, smoothly, sweetly. That's the way.

And so . . . to the . . . last . . . bar.

Five minutes.

"—Next Time"

Dull three minutes for this one, shade over if anything. Yarlett sings—there he is, dark head, tweeds. Stooping slightly, adjusting the mike. Never get singers the same height.

What's the agitation in the listening room? The time? Well, of *course* I have that well in mind. Now, to the chorus. . . . Two and a half minutes to eleven. . . .

Two more lines—now—only—one. And so the last few bars—and—chord.

Quiet, now. To the mike, quickly. Just over one minute. Good. Deep breath, and quietly:

"And so we end the programme by the B.B.C. Dance Orchestra, directed by Henry Hall. Good-night, everyone. Good-night."

One, two!

"Here's—to—the—next time—" Watch the red light. Warning flash. We're going off, slowly. "And a . . ."

Hope those car lights are all right. For another half-hour, anyway. That starter seemed—must speak to George—and the brass, too, about that slurred bar—all right, *off*.

Can talk freely now, anyway. What's that? Rehearsal?

"Yes, ten o'clock in the morning, please."

Few letters to sign. Must see this wretched man, too. Been waiting all through the session. Still, with luck be home by midnight.

"Yes, ten o'clock. Goodnight, everyone. Good-night."

Hope that goes over well . .

She was a slim woman, supple and superb, a rose of a woman.

• *Another*

Savaran

Story by

Douglas Newton

ILLUSTRATED BY A. C. MICHAEL

The LADY Jasmine

THE Arabs rode not at their usual gallop but at a jog trot. It was a pace calculated to give the full benefits of a last torture to their prisoner. The prisoner was not mounted. He ran amid the horsemen—*had* to run.

A halter stretched from his neck to the saddle-bow of one of the riders. Should he trip on the rough ground or tire in his stride, he would be jerked off his feet. Half strangled he would be dragged along the ground until his strength or nimbleness got him on to his legs again. His hands were free to help him and add to the fun. The Arabs waited eagerly on the comedy of his fall. He did not fall. The Arab with the halter tried every trick of horsemanship to bring him down. The prisoner remained upright.

A remarkable man. He was quite sure of it himself. He was also certain his captors knew it. They were wary as well as ready to enjoy his discomfiture.

The dirty shreds of a jibba revealed this man as tall, spider-spare and of that leanness of sinew that tells of a strength like drawn steel. His fiercely aquiline face was dark, darker than some of those around him, yet despite this and the dirt on him, it had the force and distinction that belongs to a white conqueror, and an extra touch of bravado few white men have.

Across the stony pan beyond the walls of a white Arab town the party trotted until it halted near a broad and shallow stream, the Wadi Jmia, the frontier line between the Sultanates of Durshan and Al-Zahal.

The man was cast loose, a dozen hands tightened on whips in the hope of at least a minute's pleasure as the fellow made his dash for freedom . . . And the prisoner stood still!

He stood easily, hands on hips, studying the faces of the escort. The big Cadi in charge sidled his horse forward, cried mockingly:

"Begone, thou conqueror of conquerors! Safety for your noble skin lieth beyond the Wadi. Why tarry, O terror of Africa? Haste ye, or I may forget the respect the Sultan, my master, has for an *inghiliz*, and treat thee as the common dirt thou art."

There was a cackle from his companions at this gibe, but it was not easy laughter, for the dark eyes studied each face so coolly. Then, with fine teeth flashing in a cheerful and ferocious smile, the prisoner said in good Arabic:

"I merely mark your faces, O Cadi of Durshan, so that when I return at the head of ten thousand swords I shall know who to hang first."

The Cadi clucked angrily, spurred forward, slashed with his whip. In a flash the man was submerged in a fog of dust, fluttering robes, cracking whips, snorting horses . . . that was the end of him, it seemed. There was a shout! Lean arms had plucked the Cadi right out of his saddle and flung him among the hoofs.

As the Arabs wheeled to let their leader scramble to his feet, a strong, easy voice came from the middle of the Wadi.

"Get thee back to thy Sultan, O Cadi. Take my message. I am Savaran, soldier of fortune, known in deeds of war from the High Atlas to the Zambesi, and I bid you tell that *kusah* (scant bearded man) that I, who have crushed nations and dethroned kings, will return and teach him that my sword which he has so contemptuously rejected has a sharp edge for puppet princes. . . . Until my hangman deals with thee, O Cadi, may Allah blight thee."

The ragged fellow standing thigh deep in water, uttered his seemingly absurd threats with the wave of a lean and contemptuous arm and went splashing towards the Al-Zahal bank.

From among the hills came tumbling a body of Al-Zahal Arabs. They fell upon Savaran with scant ceremony. Neither large gestures nor attempts to fight saved him. In a trice he was rolled in the dirt, a prisoner once more. He was tied, as before, by his neck to a saddle-bow. With bellows of laughter and the waving of friendly arms from both sides, Savaran the boaster went off as he had come, at a jog trot amid a knot of mounted men eager to see him fall.

The Sherif Ali Agha, fierce-eyed and young, presided over the Sultan's Court in the *kasbah* of Rais, the capital of Al-Zahal. He glared death at Savaran. The unconcern of this tattered ne'er-do-well added fire to his hatred of all white men.

Ali Agha, who sat in that place because a woman, his cousin, might not dispense justice to men, dreamed dreams of heaven, houris and glory to be won by sweeping the Infidel whites out of Africa. He rather fancied himself as the man for the job. He was proud in cunning, war and sheer young Arab vanity, Ali Agha.

He was therefore contemptuous of anything so degraded and ragged as this prisoner before him.

"What race of dogs art thou?" he snapped. "Franzi?"

"English," said Savaran pleasantly.

He had no personal objection to being French. He had quite often been French, *and* Italian, and Spanish when it suited his book. He knew it did not now. He knew all about Ali Agha's political ambitions, as he knew most things about Africa in his strange, acute way.

"And you are called Savaran," Ali growled. "I have heard of you."

"Who in Africa has not?" said Savaran with a superb shrug. "Savaran—the conqueror of the Zeb! Savaran who forced the Portuguese to free the Kardorengo. . . ."

"Also that Savaran who deposed the Sherif of Nenussi and vanished with the pearl of his harem and all his treasure," said Ali dangerously.

"A career so comprehensive as mine naturally has human interludes," Savaran said. "A command over women obviously goes with so great a spirit as mine."

"A veritable Saladin of the kennels," said Ali, his contemptuous eyes upon his prisoner's rags and dirt.

"And what brings you here, O redoubtable ragman knight?"

Savaran's face darkened. He was not liking the high-stomached Ali.

"What I did for the Zeb and the Futtra I can do for Al-Zahal."

"Lead us poor Arabs in war, lead us even against your brother Franks?" jeered Ali.

"What matter as long as it is war," said Savaran. "A soldier must use his sword."

"Are we so feeble that we turn to a thing of the gutters?" said Ali. "I hear you made the same pretty offer to the Sultan of Durshan. And I hear his opinion of you was no higher than a halter round your braggart neck, and a whipping to the border."

"His opinion will change," said Savaran, his face dark. "I am remembering Bir-Hiriri of Durshan, and the memory of Savaran is no pleasant thing."

"Then add me to your memory, offal dog," snarled Ali Agha, and slashed his face with a whip. "We

(*continued overleaf*)

CONTINUING

The LADY Jasmine

Arabs need no scum of Christian dregs to teach us the art of war. . . . Away with you. To-morrow I send you to the rock quarries of the mountains, we will see then how thy great spirit conquers the mountain sun and the overseer's lash. . . . That is all I think the great Savaran is fit for, slave work."

"I think," said Savaran, with a hard light in his eyes, "you are going to change your opinion, too."

Thus did Savaran, that free-lance adventurer, that Francois Villon of Africa, whose many strange adventures on barbaric thrones and in stinking prisons, in jungle and desert, would make a book as incredible and as entertaining as the "Arabian Nights," come to Al-Zahal.

As he sat in a corner of the swarming, smelly jail-yard of the *carcel*, he kept his usual brazen front, but inside he was not so happy. Mula-Grim, brigand, his companion there, was disheartening.

"Yea, they guard us loosely enough," said Mula-Grim. "It would be easy to break one of this *kasbah*, but what would it avail, O spawn of Infidels? West and south are the Tauregs and their desert, and both mean death to a fugitive. North and half the border to the east are the Durshans, for the moment friendly to Al-Zahal. It will not be a halter but a knife they will apply to your throat if you return. For the remainder of the eastern frontier are the French. And I recall the French have put a price on your head."

"They, as well as others," shrugged Savaran. "What of Al-Zahal itself, are the people so friendly to Ali Agha?"

"Not so friendly, but his sword is over them. And he has given them licence to hunt Christian dogs, and that is always a pretty pastime for the Arab. He wants them to be friendly to the Durshans, whom they fear. That was a bad mistake of yours, threatening Bir-Hiriri."

"How so? I thought Al-Zahal hated him and his tribe?"

"Yea, in their hearts," grinned Mula-Grim. "Maybe with their swords, too, if Ali Agha's plan succeeds, but now they are lip-brothers. See, this young milk-eagle, Ali Agha, dreams of himself as Khalifa, the leader of a Holy War that will make him a conqueror instead of the mere mouth of a girl. Bir-Hiriri is to be the first stepping stone to it."

"That beardless girl-man!" scoffed Savaran. "How can he lead anywhere but to the sherbet cups?"

"That is it," said Mula-Grim. "Bir-Hiriri is a soft fool leading a powerful tribe. That tribe has been taxed by the French and groans for revenge. Bir Hiriri will be forced into war, but he is not so eager. Ali Agha wants war, for it will mean glory. He is trying to persuade Bir-Hiriri to war by promising the aid of the Al-Zahal. He feels that a man of his fighting craft and fire will make him the natural leader in the field. Bir-Hiriri will then be pushed into the background, presently to be pushed out of the world altogether. Ali Agha will become Sultan of both Al-Zahal and Durshan by the right of might. He will be a great man at last—not the servant of a woman.

"And will he succeed?' asked Savaran.

"It is a pretty problem," grinned Mula-Grim, "for it balances on the whim of that woman, Ali's cousin, the Lady Jasmine, who rules the Al-Zahal."

"A woman," said Savaran, his eyes brightening; he always felt happier when there was a woman in the case.

"Yea, the daughter of the old Sultan," Mula-Grim went on. "A lotus for looks, they say, yet a serpent for brains. . . . Yea, a pretty situation. Bir-Hiriri wants her. He will link up with Al-Zahal and fight the French if he can marry her. Ali Agha is not so foolish; he knows that with the Lady Jasmine goes the mastery of the Al-Zahal, and that is what Bir-Hiriri is really after. Ali plans to marry the Lady Jasmine himself. So, suspended by a woman's hair, the plotting hangs for the moment."

"Yea, a pretty situation," said Savaran, "and the maid is lovely you say? A situation after Savaran's heart. I would I could get to the Lady Jasmine."

"You will get to the mountains and be dead in a month, instead," grinned Mula-Grim. "Think not of follies, but of your sins, Savaran."

"That is so," sighed Savaran, "time presses. I have only enough to plan my escape from this accursed latreen of a prison."

"And even that is a folly beyond happy issue," said Mula-Grim. "You cannot get free."

"There is no folly beyond Savaran," said the tattered conqueror. "None that cannot give him a stepping-stone to triumphs. You will see, Savaran boasts, but he makes good his boasts!"

Savaran felt that was true next morning as he dived out of the main street below the *kasbah* of Rais, into a narrow and noisome alley. He had not been able to choose his own time for his escape, yet here he was—escaping.

He was not even daunted when he found that the alley he had doubled into was a cul-de-sac, closed by a high wall at one end and the tall, windowless backs of Arab houses on either side. He stopped dead before the wall, hands on hips and his panting lips grinned.

It was an Arab wall; that is, its roughness presented no difficulties to a determined climber. Also it was the wall of some great garden, for many trees rose beyond it, and great Jamelon olives dropped masses of leaves over it. There was his hiding place. In a flash he was lying flat along the top, a thick screen of foliage hiding him from sight.

In another moment a mob of Arabs poured into the alley, still poured in when the first of them reached the wall, turned and cried: "Not this way! He is not here! He could not have come this way."

Savaran grinned as he saw how sure they were he could not have climbed the wall. He watched them suck and eddy out of the alley with complete satisfaction at his own cleverness.

"They will go down hill like a flock of sheep," he decided, "and will exhaust all their intelligence searching the bazaar quarters. In half an hour I will walk back up the hill past the *kasbah* and escape by the desert gate."

He had no sooner thought this than shouting broke out again down the hill. He saw men by the head of the alley stop running. Heard them catch up the shout, repeat it: "The Franzi had not gone down hill. The Sherif's guard coming up has not seen him. He is between the *kobba* and the *kasbah*."

The *kobba* was no more than fifty yards down the hill, so Savaran knew at once that the area of the search would be unpleasantly limited, and, with so many on the spot anxious for his blood, every inch would be examined.

Savaran looked down on the wrong side of the wall. He saw sleek sanded paths shaded by scent trees, glimpses of grass and flowers like jewels. . . . He saw the fretted arabesques of a distant building. A Pasha's or Cadi's palace, he thought, and that meant an extra touch of the bastinado if he were caught. . . . But what were a few bamboo cuts here or there when fanatic daggers thirsted in the alley?

He did not hesitate. He heard a blood-hungry shout:

"The wall, he might have climbed the wall!" He slid his long legs over and dropped—face to the garden and possible enemies, as was Saravan's way.

Too late did he see bright silk cushions blazing on the grass, and beside them, as though dropped by a hand tired of needlework, a *saltah* of velvet and silver. Only one sex wear that kind of jacket in Africa. . . .

Savaran knew he was coquetting with death in its most violent and painful form. He was entering a garden belonging to a harem.

He reached the ground with the lightness of a greatcat. Gave a bare second to deciding which would be the least homicidal route of escape; then,

as the mob roared close against the wall, he took a line away from it, away from the silks on the grass, doubled round a great hibiscus bush heavy with flowers and fragrance—and found his arms about a woman.

She was a slim woman, supple and superb, a rose of a woman. She was honey-skinned as became a true Arab, amber-eyed and with features as delicate and delicious as dreams. There was no evading her wonders for, safe in the privacy of her garden, she was without her *burka*.

And this was another reason why death promised to be certain and painful for Savaran. He had looked upon a beauty no casual eye might see.

It was characteristic of Savaran that, knowing this full well, he looked harder.

For a half-minute he held her; then, her silence having, as it were, linked them together as conspirators, he stepped back. It was only then that he saw that her small hand, hanging so casually amid the folds of her robe, held a jewel-hilted dagger.

He laughed, his aquiline handsomeness fiercely joyous.

"Peerless one!" he cried softly. "This is a meeting of twin souls. You would have used that without fuss. I should have squeezed that swan throat with equal certainty and calm—but we both knew greatness in the other."

He bent, lifted the empty left hand and kissed it. He placed himself completely at the mercy of that dagger then, and she knew it. The dagger had gone and she was smiling when he straightened.

"Moon over Meccah," he smiled. "If I had known this to be your garden, I would have welcomed the knives outside rather than disturb you."

Savaran's pistol spoke twice—Ali's two arms went limp.

"You know me?" she said, still not moving.

"Only your beauty," he flashed back, "and that never before outside dreams."

The quick coquetry of the East shone in her splendid eyes, to be quenched by a howl from beyond the walls. The rabble seemed to have found where his feet had scraped.

"They mean to kill you?" she said.

"Oh, surely," he answered, with an indifference that made her eyes sparkle; courage means everything to the East.

"And why—who are you?" she asked.

"I am Savaran," he said, as though saying, "I am Alexander the Great and Napoleon in one."

"The Franzi!" She laughed softly, suddenly, "I know of you."

"All Africa knows Savaran," he smiled largely. "His fame extends from the courts of princes to—"

"To the common pen of the Al-Zahal *carcel*," she helped with dancing eyes.

"Even from that Savaran's fame rose until it reached a moon among women."

She laughed, for she had her race's love of a quick allusive play upon words.

And admiration was gained; the girl's eyes brightened, a faint "Aie!" of awe came from her, and:

"You can say that though a thousand knives thirst for your life outside?" she cried, and as though responding to a cue, the mob in the alley gave tongue again.

"Others have thirsted for Savaran's life," he said, "and yet Savaran stands before you."

"It is further said," she went on, "that you promised before the whole Sultan's court to pluck the beard from Ali Agha who tried you."

"That is so," smiled Saravan, who did not recall the incident; "when he grows it—but I fear I cannot wait so long before I chastise him."

She gave way to a ripple of soft laughter.

"Would that I had been there," she cried. "Ali Agha so pompous and sure of himself, and you a ragged wretch under the shadow of the sword."

"Our souls," he said, not liking the "ragged wretch," "are not as our garments, and Savaran is not one to remain long under the sword."

As though to give him the lie, a bull-voice shouted from the alley: "He went over the wall. . . . The vile defiling dog. . . . Into the garden of our Lady Jasmine." Other voices howled. "Yea . . . over the wall. . . . Quick, round to the gate. . . . We will tear the impious cur to pieces. . . . To the gate . . .!"

There arose the noise of a crowd shifting, streaming away. . . . Savaran turned from listening to look at the girl. She was watching him closely, a smile curving ever so slightly the quick, exquisite corners of her lips. . . .

And already there was a loud thunder of knocking on the gate.

His hands went out sharply and caught her smooth shoulders. His eyes dropped to where the wide-cut *yelek* revealed the beauty of her bosom. . . . It is a custom in that country, that if any man who is in danger kisses a maid of Al-Zahal on the bosom, he is safe from their swords for ever.

It is one of those safe customs which Arabs love, for so closely are the women guarded that the feat is practically impossible. But it is the word of Arabs and so it holds . . . and Savaran, with a maid of Al-Zahal at his mercy, knew it. And she knew it, and watched him closely with faintly mocking eyes.

Savaran lifted his glance to hers with a queer twisted smile, drew her to him—and kissed her full on her lips.

"Death is sweeter that way than life behind the skirts of a woman," he said, and turned and stalked towards the wall—a raffish but gallant figure.

She stood very still, the thunder of knocking on the gate increased, Savaran's leap took his hand to the top of the wall, then:

"Franzi," she softly called. "Franzi . . . behind the hangings in my tent! Quick, O man of men. . . ."

Savaran stood between silken inner and outer walls of her marquee, chuckling. . . . He was Savaran after all, bound to triumph. He had power in him. Ten minutes ago a hunted tatterdemalion, now . . .

The girl was standing before her tent, a golden *burka* now hiding her golden beauty. Harem women came running towards her, shrilling fearfully at the knocking on the gate. Towards that gate a body of eunuchs armed with gold inlaid weapons and clad in rich robes, went lumbering. Such flunkies belong only to the houses of kings.

But already Savaran knew he was in the house of a queen. He had heard the mob shout her name. . . . The Lady Jasmine, ruler of Al-Zahal!

And he, Savaran, who had always the instinct for the right gesture, had held her in his arms, kissed her lips—and lived.

"I am about to be a king and more!" he smiled.

The Lady Jasmine drew herself out of Saravan's arms, smiled—said softly:

"Let us talk of war, O Prince of Men."

"It is a waste of good love," smiled Savaran with a flash of his splendid teeth and a shrewdness in his eyes.

"Aie, that is so," she sighed. "Yet I am the Mother of my people, too, and it has been made known to me that your words, O wisdom, are good words."

"Al-Zahal wants not Ali's war?" he asked, his keen face alert. He watched her cross the marble and mosaic floor to the great door to make sure that only the deaf eunuch guard was near.

"I have spoken to my sheiks," she said when she returned to his side; "not the serve-all-to-serve-self riff-raff of the town here, who fawn on Ali, but the solid chiefs of the country. It is as you say, O far-seeing eye, they like not this war talk against the Franzi. They know as you know, that Al-Zahal will be eaten up as the Christian eats all tribes."

"And their attitude towards Durshan?" he asked.

"They distrust Durshan," she said. "Durshan has always been the snake that swallows the Al-Zahal frog."

"So, they are readier to fight Durshan than for Durshan?" cried Savaran, his eyes gleaming.

"Fight Durshan!" she cried, eyes flashing. "Show us but the way to conquer that land of dogs and every sword in Al-Zahal is behind you. . . . But what way can there be when Durshan puts in line four men to our one?"

"I am Savaran," he said largely. "I have found a way over greater odds. Cunning has an edge as sharp as extra swords. . . . And I, too, have sworn to teach Bir-Hiriri what it means to treat Savaran with contempt."

"You have a plan, O Fox of Cunning?" she cried.

"I have thought a little," said Savaran with a gleam in his eyes. "You are sure neither Ali nor his jackals know of me or your talk with your sheiks?"

"Nothing," she said. "My household can be trusted. The sheiks will be silent out of joy over the fall of Ali. He walks too proudly for them, treats them too scurvily, and his brain is too dangerous with this foolishness of a Holy War."

"And thou," he teased, "are you to be the willing bride of Ali—as Ali plans?"

"Ali!" she cried. "I would rather marry a dog than that vain, strutting pig of self pride. . . . Ali, when there is *you*! Besides, his love for me wanes. Bir-Hiriri presses for marriage with me as the main clause of his alliance; and for glory Ali will pass me over. Me! And to that hen-Arab!"

Savaran laughed softly.

"Pretty fellows! Pretty fellows!" he chuckled. "They plot like weasels thinking lions blind to antics. See, O fragrance of delight, Bir-Hiriri strokes his girl's face and thinks with a leer: 'I will take this girl and through her will gain lordship over the Al-Zahal; so they and Ali will be my tools against the Franzi.' At the same time Ali Agha's rat mind chuckles, 'I will give her to this harem Sultan, so that while he dallies with love, I, in the field, will prove myself the fighting captain that Durshan as well as Al-Zahal must honour. I will master his kingdom with the sword while he is weak with kisses. . . . And as a widow the Lady Jasmine

(*continued overleaf*)

CONTINUING The LADY Jasmine

will be even better than as maid, for she will bring me Al-Zahal in her own right and Durshan by right of wifehood. Thus I shall be doubly secure.'"

In fury the Lady Jasmine sprang up and stamped her small hennaed feet.

"You offend me with such talk," she stormed. "Am I not love? Am I so poor a thing that you sit meekly while I am bandied here and there like a chattel? Am I not Sultana of Al-Zahal and beautiful?"

"Thou art the beauty for which man draws his sword and risks his life and kingdom," cried Savaran, "even as I shall, O star of perfection." His teeth flashed. "And by the same token Bir-Hiriri will lose his, for Savaran's sword will give you Durshan as a love token."

She melted into his arms, this Eastern wonder-child of quick love and quick rages.

"Prince among men," she breathed, "let me proclaim thee and thy wonder to Al-Zahal now."

"Not yet," he smiled. "Let my glory be that of warriors. I would be acclaimed by a sea of swords in a kingdom I have conquered. Besides, by silence and cunning we deal with Bir-Hiriri the better."

"And Ali," she cried. "He dies—and now?"

"Nay," he smiled softly. "He goes to-morrow to Durshan—to arrange your marriage with Bir-Hiriri!"

"I will not be linked with Bir-Hiriri even in name," she cried passionately, struggling in his arms.

"Pearl of women," he laughed, holding her easily, "listen to the word of Savaran. It is wisdom. Can Al-Zahal master Durshan alone? No! Can it crush Durshan with an ally? Assuredly. What ally is there? Only the French, who are already suspicious of Durshan and ready to fight. But will Durshan dare the French? Never without Al-Zahal. Can we then force Durshan into war with the French? Only if you marry Bir-Hiriri. You see, O dove, all turns on your marriage. Only with the promise of you will Bir-Hiriri agree to attack the French. Only with the French on our side can Al-Zahal fight Durshan. . . . You, your name is but a bait, O jewel, to catch Durshan."

She lay back, little hennaed fingers pleating his strong fingers, half won, half sombre.

"Tell me more of this plan," she said.

"Ali Agha will go to Durshan to negotiate this marriage. He will spend a month on it. I want a month, so difficulties must be raised now and then. . . . I need that month to become the friend of your sheiks, to plan, to prepare . . . to get in touch with the French. Besides, a month will suit Bir-Hiriri. If things are too easy, he may suspect a danger in cheapness; he must be pleased with the cunning bargain he drives. So, after that month, you will set out to Durshan and the marriage that will seal the compact."

"That is what I fear," she said, frowning anxiously. "Bir-Hiriri will commit himself to nothing until he is sure of me; Bir-Hiriri has cunning——"

"And has not Savaran?" he laughed. "Savaran knows that weasel-mind like a book, and will play it. . . . Listen, O sun of delight. . . ."

He pulled her down to his breast; spoke swiftly, softly, holding her tight. . . . The frown lifted from her face, smiles broke. . . . She was laughing, arms about his neck.

"O king of men!" she cried. "No wonder all Africa stirs at the mere sound of your name!"

Ali Agha, wearing already the looks, speaking already in the tones of the conqueror of all Christendom, met the bridal train of the Lady Jasmine at the Wadi Jmia.

It was at the spot where Savaran had been whipped across the stream by the Cadi of Durshan. The Cadi was in the retinue of Durshan nobles sent with Ali to greet the bride, but neither he nor Ali had a thought to spare for that tattered wastrel, so full and ambitious were their hopes.

The Lady Jasmine crossed the Wadi in state. Her *shugduf* of pearl and ivory swaying on the back of a princely camel, was but one of three score splendid litters bearing the women of her harem and the grandees of her land. With this splendid caravan rode two thousand picked horsemen, and as many foot servants also marched. Durshan, however, viewed this array with joy rather than suspicion, and saluted it with a wild festal firing of rifles into the hard blue of the North African sky.

All Durshan was glad of such numbers, for all Durshan knew of the alliance and gloried in the knowledge that, after the marriage and the signing of the pact on the morrow, these warlike fellows would march shoulder to shoulder with them against the Franzi.

The wedding was to be the signal for war.

"Good fighting stuff," cried the Cadi of Durshan, looking over the Al-Zahal men. "With them we will sweep the Franzi from the frontier in our first rush."

"And there are as good behind," said Ali exultantly. "You see how yet others camp behind the Wadi? There are seven thousand warriors there ready to march across the Jmia to join us once the compact is signed."

There were even more than that. Thousands of Al-Zahal Arabs were already in Durshan town, flocked thither to join in the wedding festivities as sightseers, but Ali did not know this, nor Bir-Hiriri. Ali and Bir-Hiriri had only capacities for seeing what seemed to make themselves important.

Ali had an audience with the Lady Jasmine, and was able to assure Bir-Hiriri, the always-cautious, that his wife-to-be had not only arrived in Durshan, but was exceedingly complaisant.

Bir-Hiriri rubbed his effeminate hands together and leered. He had already had assurance of this from the harem women he had sent hurrying to serve the Lady Jasmine—and play spy on her. Bir-Hiriri was no fool, if he was no man either.

"I hear that she has been greatly persuaded by a new sybil she hath discovered," he said.

"It is so," said Ali. "I saw the woman, a gaunt, veiled hag from the mountains by her looks . . . but a woman of marvel. It was she who, when my Lady doubted, won her by telling that she saw in the sand the promise of glory for her arising out of a wedding ceremony in the *kasbah* of Durshan. It was she who delayed the setting out from Al-Zahal until the fifth day of the fifth moon, because that day was auspicious. It was she who, when our Lady Jasmine showed maiden fears yesterday, bade her cross the Wadi for she saw her star rise higher with every step she took into Durshan."

Both men nodded wisely, eyed each other with bright, crafty eyes. Being Arabs, they believed in such utterances with all their hearts. Being foxes, each was sure these promises of triumph referred solely to himself. They added more rejoicing to the general rejoicing.

All were smiles when, at midday and no earlier—the sybil from the mountains had set the precise time—the pearl and ivory litter of the Lady Jasmine went swaying through the gates into the great court of the *kasbah*, a mob swarming about it with joyful shouts. If there was a fly in the ointment, it arose from the fact that the crush into that courtyard seemed to force rather more citizens of Durshan to remain outside than seemed proper.

At the entrance to the Sultan's great palace, Bir-Hiriri and his sheiks, Ali and the Cadi of Durshan, waited the moment of their triumph with bosoms swelling. They were so full of their glory that they were not greatly put out when they learnt that the old witch woman from the mountains had again poked her sybilline finger into the wheels of ceremonial.

The Lady Jasmine did not leave her litter. Indeed, word was passed to Bir-Hiriri that the pact of marriage and war must be signed before she did.

"After! After!" cried Bir-Hiriri, impatient for marriage.

"Now," said Ali, after consultation through the muffling silks of the litter. "The hili woman read the sand this morning. She saw written there that triumph can only come if the pact-signing precedes the marriage. The Lady Jasmine refuses to disobey the order set by heaven. . . ."

Bir-Hiriri, impatient, swayed by superstition, too, cried: "Fetch the pact!" What did it matter anyhow? He was supreme here, and the deed that meant war must be signed within an hour in any case.

A table appeared, writing materials, the heavy rolled parchment of the pact. Bir-Hiriri bent feverishly over it, wrote, lifted a triumphant face: "I have signed!" he cried.

The words were caught up by the mob within the courtyard. "Bir-Hiriri has signed!" roared three thousand voices—and two thousand had an Al-Zahal accent.

Bir-Hiriri,stirred to the core by such glad clamour, lifted the treaty in his own hands and held it to the silk curtains of the litter. As he did so, he was stirred to the core in quite a different way. . . . The great shouting was now not all joy. . . . There were yells in it—from his own people. . . . Yells of pain! He glanced round quickly, saw numbers of them falling, struck down by Al-Zahal men. Just as he realised how hugely he and his were outnumbered, the great gates closed with a slam like thunder and he saw a mob of Al-Zahal warriors securing them.

And at the same instant, too, a hand darted through the curtains of the litter, and took—no, snatched—the parchment of the compact out of his feeble fingers . . . the pact on which he had signed his declaration of war against the Franzi.

"Treachery!" he screamed. "Treachery!" and shrank back on Ali and the Cadi of Durshan. Ali, like most windbags, was hopeless in action; the Cadi, at least, was not.

"A trap!" he snarled. "We are caught. . . . But, by the sword, we have their Lady Jasmine. Seize her! She is our only chance of living!"

His own hands tore the silken curtains aside, his own strong body dived in to clutch the princess. . . . Then he backed slowly out, his eyes mesmerised by the muzzle of a pistol that goaded him. . . .

They all saw the tall, spider-spare man who stood between the parted hangings, saw the cheerfully ferocious smile on his dark aquiline face. All caught up the Cadi of Durshan's cry:

"Savaran! Savaran is here!"

"Savaran!" cried Savaran, enjoying the drama of the moment. "Savaran! He whom you whipped out of Durshan keeps his promise and returns, Bir-Hiriri! Savaran who marked you for hanging, O Cadi, is here to hang! Savaran whom you put in prison, Ali Agha, has come to take payment! . . . Ah, but that is stupid, Ali. Savaran is a master with the pistol as well as a master of men. . . ."

Ali had darted both hands to his girdle, torn a dagger and a pistol from it . . . and Savaran's pistol spoke twice . . . just twice, but Ali's two arms went limp, a bullet through the forearm of each.

"Back!" cried Savaran fiercely to Bir-Hiriri and his nobles. "Your nearness is an offence; back among the other Durshan cattle. . . ." The menace of his weapons drove them cowering towards the remnant of the Durshan Arabs huddled under Al-Zahal guards. Bir-Hiriri, shambling with fear, could scarcely walk, until a bullet into the earth at his toes made him skip amid the harsh laughter of his foes.

Only the Cadi of Durshan had the manhood to shout defiance.

"You shall pay!" he roared. "You trap us now, but what is Al-Zahal?—only a handful of women. Durshan will rise in its thousands and blot Al-Zahal out. . . . Fools, to think you can dare Durshan alone. . . ."

"Not alone," grinned Savaran. "Don't you hear? Don't you see?"

He pointed upwards. In the silence that came at that all heard the menacing, soul-intimidating drone of aeroplanes—all saw high in the air, and coming fast, three squadrons of bombing planes in battle formation.

"The French are to time," said Savaran. "But then, Savaran arranged it. . . . That is why the sybil fixed the hour of marriage so definitely."

The courtyard rocked with Al-Zahal laughter then. The Arab loves a shrewd joke, and every Al-Zahal warrior there knew that Savaran himself had been the sybil.

"The French," cried Bir-Hiriri shrilly. "That is the end of Al-Zahal, too, then; Al-Zahal has promised to fight the French."

"Nay, the signature of Bir-Hiriri of Durshan alone is on the pact," said Savaran. "The French know that. I am in treaty with the French whose troops march now to take Durshan while Al-Zahal holds it. I and the French understand one another."

"You," shrilled Ali, "who are you to treat with the French?"

"I am Savaran," said Savaran. "I am also commander-in-chief to the Lady Jasmine and act by her authority and desire and that of her people."

"The Lady Jasmine," shrilled Bir-Hiriri, "she cannot know the scum you are."

"The Lady Jasmine," cried Ali. "She does not know you as I know you, kennel dog."

"She knows me better than both of you," said Savaran with gusto, "I am what you, Ali, thought yourself too important to be, what you, Bir-Hiriri, were too crafty to be . . . I am her husband!"

He stood there glowing, conscious that he had made a superb gesture and looked his best.

A flag waved over the great gate, a sheik touched his forehead and spoke humbly to him.

"Open the gate!" he cried in a great voice. "Durshan is mine! Ho, make a way down the centre of the courtyard, guards! . . . Savaran receives the envoy of France!"

Under Three Flags

Rhapsody in Red

by

J.H. SQUIRE

This is the second chapter of the thrilling life story of the composer whose Celeste Octet has been playing to British Radio audiences for thirteen years.

THERE are many things Americans can teach us, but discipline is not one of them. The double topsail schooner, *Betsy B. Maryland*, in which I sailed from New York, flew the American flag, was commanded by a Yankee with American officers, and carried a villainous black and white crew that worked and fought and cursed on a knife-edge of near-mutiny.

Forty-one years ago, on her voyage to South America, she also carried two ship's boys of whom one was killed and the other—myself—was driven to killing in self-defence.

The *Queen Anne*, my first ship, was a palace compared to the *Betsy B.*, which was of less than 200 tons. The forecastle of the American schooner was the filthiest and most cramped I have ever seen, and the eighteen men who bunked in it—fourteen assorted "Dagoes," two Yanks, and two Niggers—were all drawn from the worst riff-raff of the world's "sailor towns."

I was a good deal hardened to such company, but Henry Weaver, the other ship's boy, came from a decent New England home and winced at filthy language. At first I thought him rather a "Sissy." He was fourteen, but he blushed too easily. He was slim and fair-haired and I knocked him spinning with one punch, never guessing that he was game to the last ounce.

Some of the men staged a fight between us when we were no more than a day or two out from New York. I had scarcely spoken to Weaver then, but I didn't mind having a scrap with him. Fighting has always been rather fun to me and, though he was a shade taller than myself, I felt sure I could lick him. It didn't occur to me that he would worry very much about a bit of a fight.

But he did. It wasn't pluck that was lacking; it was simply that he hated being made to amuse the men. I didn't care, perhaps because I was less sensitive, perhaps because I knew that we should be "for it" if we didn't stand up to each other. And so, when the taunting and the jeering had gone on long enough, I said: "Come on then, Weaver; let's fight!"

One of the men, an Italian of sorts though his hair had a bit of a kink in it, made a particularly filthy reference to Weaver's parentage, and the boy stood up reluctantly with his cheeks scarlet. He didn't know how to use his fists and I knocked him down almost at once. He picked himself up again and there was a trickle of blood from his cut mouth, but his eyes held a dumb and despairing courage, and I was suddenly sorry for him.

"That's enough," I said, "I'm not fighting any more and to hell with the lot of you!"

Then we both got thrashed and naturally became friends. Unfortunately, we were in different watches and couldn't see much of one another. There was never any privacy on the *Betsy B. Maryland*, and Weaver couldn't talk easily in any case. He had heard the whole of my short life story long before he gave me any real confidence in return.

Indeed, I never did learn the whole truth. All I know for certain is that he ran away to sea just as I did, but not for the same reason. He was happy enough at home, but the spirit of adventure had taken possession of him, and he had been full of dreams of romance and excitement and brave deeds and foreign travel. So he emptied his money box and ran away to New York to find the *Betsy B.*

From the relatively vast depths of my experience—one previous voyage and my shore adventures in New York—I was sorry for Henry Weaver and did all I could to help him.

The life was rough enough even for me, but I could knot, splice, reef and steer with the best of them, and box the compass into the bargain. And I was very hard and fit for my age. Moreover, I still had Kerryman's old cornet with me, and even that crew didn't want to be too hard upon the only musician aboard.

Luck was with me, too, in another way. I knew something about accounts and the captain, discovering this, made use of my knowledge. Weaver had none of my advantages, *yet* the brave little bit of a lad would still kneel down by his bunk to say his prayers!

I used to kneel down by my own bed when I was at home, but I only tried it once after I joined a ship. Howls of derision and a hearty kick in the stern greeted me when I first knelt down, And I said to myself, "Jack, you can pray just as well in your bunk as kneeling down beside it."

Weaver, who couldn't fight, was made of stronger stuff. He had more "guts" than ever I had. And I don't think he ever missed saying his prayers, no matter what the temptation to do so. His only concession to brutality and abuse was to try to find a moment when all hands were either on deck or the watch below asleep in its bunks.

One day I was down in the forecastle making tea for the watch on deck, and Weaver, ignoring me, knelt at his bunk. There were half a dozen men snoring, and we two boys seemed to be the only wakeful spirits. I went on with my job quietly, rather upset by the look in Weaver's face with its tight-shut eyes and the lips that moved in a sort of agony of supplication.

There was a Negro in that watch below whom we called "Big Jake." He stirred in his sleep and swore. Then he raised himself on his elbow and I could see the rolling whites of his eyes as he stared about him in that gloomy and stinking forecastle. At last he focused his gaze on Weaver, still kneeling.

Jake never said a word. He leaned over his bunk and groped for something on the floor below him.

I was watching the "Fanny"—a big tin can holding nearly a gallon and a half—which was then nearing boiling point. I did not see Jake fling his missile, but I looked up sharply at Weaver's high scream of pain when the heavy sea-boot caught him behind the ear.

Rage took hold of me. I have been drunk a good many times, but there is no drink in the world so intoxicating as really wild anger. If you once get furious *enough*, no pain can touch you and no risk deter. I was so angry that I lifted the "Fanny" from the stove, ran over to Big Jake's bunk and emptied a gallon and a half of scalding tea over his head and shoulders.

He howled like a madman, leapt clear of the blankets and tore up on deck to bury his head and shoulders in the cold water tub. The other men sat up in their bunks, cursing the row that was going on, and the second Negro aboard, Jake's pal, came thundering down from deck to look for me.

There was no escape. He found me and hit me. He didn't try to knock me out; he simply punched and kicked and pummelled me until I was dizzy. Poor little Weaver came at him grandly with big eyes blazing in his thin face, but he was sent reeling

(*continued on page* 13)

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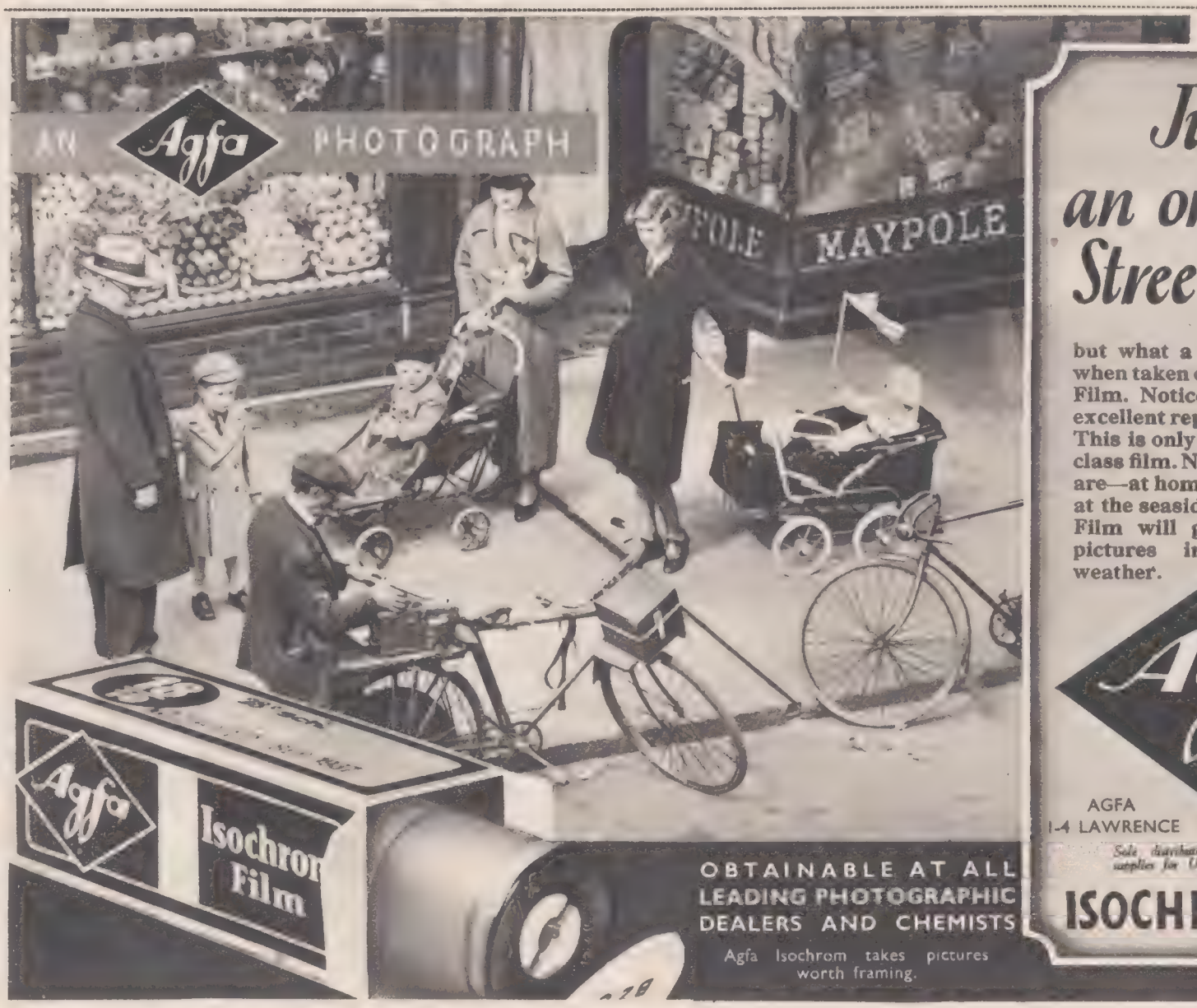

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CONTINUING Under Three Flags

with a single back-hander. Then the Negro gripped me by the seat of my breeches and the collar of my shirt and flung me away like a stone out of a catapult.

I landed against something hard, felt a spasm of searing pain and heard a sharp crack like the breaking of a dry stick. My left arm had snapped between the shoulder and the elbow. I staggered up the ladder and made my way towards the bridge.

The captain when he saw me asked what was the matter. "Sorry, sir," I said, "but I've slipped and broken my arm."

He asked no questions. "Take over," he said to the First Mate, and then: "Come with me, boy; I'll fix you."

In his own cabin he sat on his bunk with me standing opposite to him. He felt my arm with big yet sensitive fingers, and said: "Hold it, kid." He gave a little jerk with both hands that brought the two ends of bone into place, and I nearly fainted with the pain. Ten minutes later this entirely untrained surgeon had my broken arm in rough splints and was shooing me out of the cabin in front.

No surgeon could have done the job better. My arm healed marvellously, and it has been as straight and unhampered as the other ever since.

The captain never uttered a word of sympathy and never made the slightest inquiry as to the cause of the accident. He merely shepherded me on deck and took over once more from the First Mate.

"Mr. Mate," he said gruffly, "this boy's broken his left arm." There were several of the crew within earshot at the time. "If there's any son-of-a-something in this crew touches him until he's out of splints, I'll rip the liver out of him. This kid's my clerk (clurk, he pronounced it) and his right arm belongs to me. Get that?"

After that, for nearly a month, I swaggered about the *Betsy B. Maryland*, doing nothing but the captain's accounts. No one dared touch me, but there was plain murder in the eyes of both the Negroes. I carried my arm in a sling and that was a sufficient protection under the captain's threat.

But the broken bone set quickly, and I was boyishly impatient of a sling once I could use my arm freely again. During all the interval I had scarcely any opportunity to talk to Henry Weaver. On my first night on duty after I had discarded the sling, I was told to open a hatchway, and for this purpose I was given a heavy crowbar.

As I passed the forecastle, the man who had broken my arm shouted out: "Ha,! Here's de little Limey (Englishman) back again! Wait 'til ah get up on deck! When ah cotch you, ah sure is going to give you hell!"

I had been berthing aft with the cook for four weeks, but I was due to return to my bunk that night, and I knew I was "for it" with a vengeance with heavy arrears to settle, once they had me alone below decks.

Once again I felt that queer thrill of rage that lifts one quite above the fear of consequences. I wanted to meet Weaver, whom I hadn't seen for more than a week, and at least exchange a word with him before the crash came. But I looked down and saw the big, flat black face of this Negro, with the whites of his eyes gleaming and his purplish lips drawn back from his magnificent teeth.

"*You'll* give me hell?" I shouted in that thin disconcerting falsetto that sometimes afflicts a boy in his 'teens. "You black swine, *you'll* give me hell, will you?"

"Ah will," he said, "and wid de lid off!"

He was springing up the steps as he spoke, and the curly black wool on the top of his head showed above deck level. I was standing well above him and I swung my iron crowbar.

"If the lid's off hell," I cried, with a sort of shrill giggle of sheer nervous excitement, "you go back and have a look inside it!"

With the words I brought the crowbar down with all my force upon his upturned forehead. The blow jarred my arm and made a dull crunching sound. The Negro's face gleamed up at me, black and shining with the white teeth bared. Slowly, as it seemed to me, and quite astonishingly, the fingers let go their hold and the big frame slumped and toppled backwards into the darkness. I ran down the deck as though the devil were after me.

There were others of the crew who came pounding in pursuit to the "Old Man's" cabin. They had seen, or comprehended, the assault on their mate, and they chipped in furiously with their version of it after I had told my own tale.

"Get back to the fo'c'sle, you swine," said the captain, quite unmoved; "I'll look after this little devil."

Thereupon, with no words wasted and no lecture read, I was confined aft in a tiny cabin.

The Negro died that night, the front of his skull having been fractured by my blow. They sewed the body up in a sail and slid it over the side in the orthodox fashion with the captain himself gabbling a hasty version of the burial service. I was asleep at the time, but next day towards noon, I was staring wide awake when the body of poor young Weaver was consigned to the sea in the same way.

Weaver had died—so I learned later—from sheer nervous exhaustion, although I believe his death was entered in the log as due to pneumonia. There is not in my mind the slightest doubt that he succumbed primarily to the brutal treatment he received from the crew.

After the Negro died, I was nominally placed under arrest to be handed over to the British Consul at the next port of call.

Then he left me to my own fears. They were bad enough at that age. I thought I was bound to be hanged, and my neck hurt me with the feel of the imagined rope. But I was never sorry for the Negro I had killed. Indeed, I thought of him with a vindictive satisfaction, feeling that I had helped to pay some part of Weaver's score against a gang of filthy bullies.

Confined to this small cabin aft, I was nevertheless expected to continue my work on the captain's involved accounts, and this labour was a godsend to me in my anxiety. The captain saw me only once during this period, and then he eyed me in an oddly speculative way.

"Hittin' him,I c'd understand," he muttered,"but hittin' him so gol-durned hard, that's diffrunt. Why, boy, that nigger's forehead was stove in just like a busted egg! You should ought to be more careful!"

When we neared Rio, I could see the shore from the porthole. We made harbour after dark. No sooner had the anchor touched bottom than I crept unobserved from the cabin, stole up on deck for they hadn't even troubled to lock me in, and slipped over the side. It was a long swim to shore, but I got away, so far as I know, unseen and unsuspected, and when I struggled ashore I looked back and could just make out the dim silhouette of the *Betsy B. Maryland* riding at anchor. That was my last glimpse of that evil-omened schooner.

Rio de Janeiro was a queer, uncertain city in those days. Luckily, I still had that packet of American dollars sewn into the tail of my shirt, and I found food and lodging of a sort two days before I realised that there was a war on.

All this happened, it must be remembered, just over forty years ago, when I was only thirteen years old. All that I could understand at the time was that hostilities had broken out between the Brazilian admiral afloat and the Brazilian general ashore. There were recruiting offices on either side of a main street, with the rival officers hurling curses at each other from morning until the time of the siesta. Then, to my utter astonishment, the two enemies would go off together, presumably to lunch.

The high adventure of war seemed to me the only way out of my difficulties. With a feeling of glorious impartiality, I went to the recruiting office on the right-hand side of the street as one walked seawards. They threw me out, eloquently but incomprehensibly. From their swift speech and waving arms and rolling eyes, I guessed that they were trying to explain that I was far too young to be of any use.

Undeterred, I walked across the road to the other recruiting office, where I was fortunate enough to find an interpreter of sorts. I couldn't understand him, but he seemed to understand me, and he almost frothed at the mouth trying to explain to an officer in a gorgeous uniform that I could blow a trumpet.

They fetched me a trumpet and that did the trick. I played what I could, and the officer evidently considered that I could play what was needed. Papers were placed in front of me which I could not read, and I signed on the dotted line two or three times. Somebody at once presented me with a silver dollar—one day's pay—and then I was marched out of the city and into a great camp and there assigned to a hut shared by half a dozen black-jowled, dark-eyed, cigarette-rolling warriors in tattered uniforms and the oddest assortment of civilian rags.

The next three or four weeks were taken up with incessant drills. I was attached to an officer who, in our own army, would have been the adjutant, I fancy. I had to follow him everywhere and blow a few trumpet calls when required.

I have seen something of real war since those days, but for sheer comic-opera "fighting," that South American revolution has never been equalled in my experience, except upon the screen, and then only in pictures which were intended to be funny. Yet this more than Ruritanian farce was grim with slaughter.

I shall never forget my first impressions of "the Grand Example." All troops were fallen in on a flat open space just outside the camp hutments. Not speaking the language, I didn't even know what was about to happen. Presently a squad of men and a single officer marched up briskly with four prisoners, walking two and two in the middle of the squad.

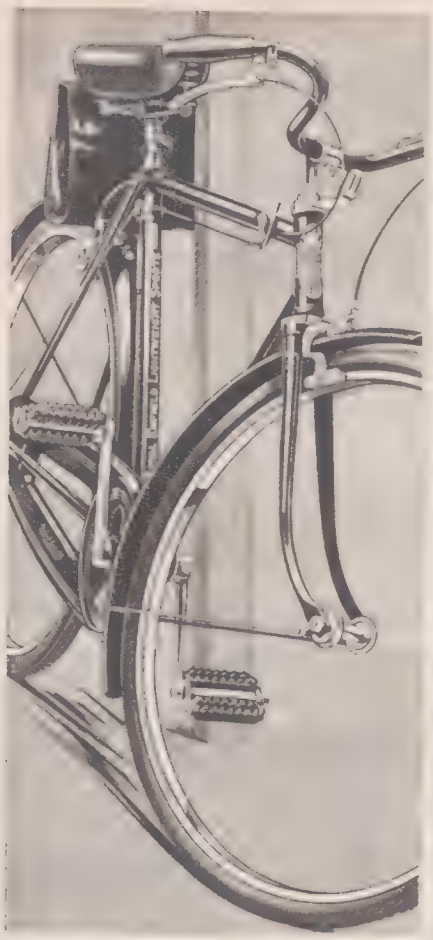
They were our own men, and I had played Faro with one of them, a smiling, bronzed, hawk-nosed young fellow named Pedro. I don't think he could have been more than seventeen, but he had run away into Rio to see his girl one evening and a patrol had picked him up. The other three men were rank and file "Tommies" whom I didn't know. They seemed quite unconcerned.

Pedro flashed a smile at me as he passed and shouted a greeting to a friend. The squad came to a halt by four wooden stakes in the open place; the officer barked an order; and the prisoners were given spades. They made no protest whatever. They just set to work digging their own graves, one grave behind each post. It took them, I should think, about twenty minutes, because the graves were marked out and there was no need for them to be deep.

When this task was accomplished, the prisoners were pinioned, blindfolded and bound each to his own post. The firing squad took up its position, the officer gave the word of command, a volley rang

(*continued on page* 15)

"We fired at an invisible enemy all day and marched back to the camp in the evening."



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Continuing Under Three Flags

Rio was "out of bounds" to the soldiers; and the penalty for disobeying was to face the firing squad at dawn.

out, and the bound figures went limp. It was horrible.

When I saw Pedro crumple, I bit my tongue to keep back a cry.

The bodies were tumbled into the shallow graves, sprinkled with quicklime and covered with earth. "The Grand Example" was complete.

During five months I served under Brazilian colours, I must have seen at least a score of similar executions, though they were usually of only one man at a time. The example appeared to have little effect on the troops. They took it philosophically as part of the business of war, and desertions continued.

It wouldn't be far wrong to say that I think I might almost have enjoyed this war but for two things. The first was that I couldn't learn Spanish and was never able to have a satisfying talk with a friend. And the second was that we were all so abominably fed.

Reveille was at five o'clock in the morning. Then came a wash, if one was lucky, then parade and inspection of arms, and then breakfast, such as it was. It was rarely anything more than a hunk of black bread with some warm slush that looked like coffee to wash it down. After that we marched out and began to fire at a distant and often almost invisible enemy. When we were marched back to camp in the evening, we could look forward to more black bread and an indescribable stew of potatoes and vegetables and scraps of meat.

The officers could get permission to go into Rio in the evenings, but, for the troops, the camp was our extreme limit, and the punishment for disobeying orders or going out of bounds was death.

We filled in the dreary hours gambling with small silver and copper money, or telling interminable stories that I could not even understand. We never drew our pay and, changing each American dollar with fearful secrecy, I watched my little hoard come gradually to an end. In five months I lost all my money and more than a stone in weight and, at the end of that time, I was desperate for a change.

Discipline was very slack and it wasn't at all difficult to pass the sentries and sneak out of camp under cover of the "dinner" activities. Rio was only a few miles away, and I escaped and ran there. I dared not show myself in uniform, but I was so hungry that I went round the dustbins looking for scraps. I found a bully beef tin only half empty, and ate its contents like a wolf. It sounds revolting, but a *really* hungry boy of fourteen becomes so ravenous that he would almost do murder for a little solid grub.

Appeased and happy, I tried to get back to camp before "lights out," but luck was against me. Just outside the camp I was pounced on, not by a sentry, but by one of our own officers, himself returning from Rio, well fed and much warmed with wine. He seized me by the collar and marched me straight to the Colonel's quarters.

This young officer seemed rather elated by having made a capture, but the Colonel, lean and grey-moustached, was working out a chess problem on a pocket board. He considered me with a bilious and indifferent eye. I could not understand his actual words, but their meaning was unmistakable. It was simply, "Take him away and have him shot in the morning."

My captor made this clear to me as he led me away. He raised an imaginary rifle to his shoulder and made a loud popping sound with blown-out lips. "*Grand example!*" he said in English, then hiccoughed.

Then, for a little while, I was deadly frightened. I could think of nothing but Pedro's face the day he smiled at me before digging his own grave.

On our way across part of the camp, another officer fell in with my captor, and the pair of them turned into the latter's quarters, presumably to have a drink before I was handed over to a guard. We entered a rather better hut than the men had. It contained a couple of cots, a table and three or four chairs and there was an aperture in the wall which served as a window. This aperture could be closed by a kind of shutter-flap, held up by two chains. There was a sentry on duty outside, but the officer's orderly, who should have had supper ready for him, was not to be found. Both officers, much aggrieved by this, said a word to the sentry outside, pointing significantly at me, and then ordered me to prepare supper from what materials there were. It was a simple job, consisting chiefly of opening a tin of beef and drawing several corks—at intervals.

They played piquet together as they ate and drank and one of them gave me a glass of sourish wine in the most friendly way, explaining in broken English that it was the last I should ever drink.

"Good wine!" he said encouragingly, and then popped with his lips again and roared with laughter.

Soon they forgot me entirely in the fortunes of their game. About an hour later they began to quarrel in fierce excited voices and with furious gestures. I think they differed on some point of rules, but, judging from the small change on the table before them, the total stakes couldn't have been worth more than three or four shillings of English money.

Nothing would satisfy them, however, but to refer this difficulty to some third party, and they dashed out of the hut together for a verdict.

The sentry, probably as hungry as I had been an hour or two before, came into the hut immediately they had left it and wolfed what crumbs of food remained on the table. Then he scowled threateningly at me, tapped his rifle, and went outside again to resume his leisurely pacing from the door on one side of the hut to the opening, like the top of a coffee stall, on the other.

There was a sort of locker in one corner of the hut. I opened it and found fifty dollars in American notes. I put them into my own pocket.

One of the two officers had hitched off his belt before supper and his revolver holster with it. I was quite desperate because, although the whole situation seemed so much like a game of playing soldiers, I knew perfectly well that in the morning I should be taken out and shot.

So I picked up the revolver, went over to that wall through which I could see a square of velvet sky pricked with stars, and waited. The sentry was bored and weary. He stopped just under the window to light the fag-end of a half-smoked cigarette. The light of the match lit up a swarthy cheek behind cupped hands, as I brought the butt of the revolver down on his head with all my force. He dropped without a sound, and I was over the sill and away within a few seconds. I reached Rio for the second time that evening without a challenge, and I made at once for the docks.

An officer came out of a cafe that was still illuminated, saw me running, shouted loudly, and broke into pursuit. I outdistanced him, turned a corner, found myself on a deserted wharf, and jumped into a huge empty barrel. Soon I heard the officer pounding by me in the dark. Then all was quiet again and finally I fell asleep.

When I woke, the sunshine was slanting over the top of the barrel to form a twisted semi-circle of bright light that looked like the lower half of a golden-ripe pear. I blinked, rubbed my eyes, and raised a tousled head above the edge of the barrel.

There was no sign of life on the dock but a boat, flying a flag which I could not make out at that distance, was pulling inshore.

I clambered out, wiped the fish scales and refuse off my ragged uniform and stood waiting. Presently, as the ship's boat drew nearer with its powerful, regular beat of oars, I could see that it was flying a dirty Red Ensign and I could have shouted with joy.

Just as I could begin to pick out the rowers and the big man at the tiller, with his flat cap tilted aslant, I heard the tramp of feet away over on my left and, immediately afterwards, I saw a squad of soldiers come round the bend on to the dock side. They were our own men with two officers in charge.

Now, I had been told that all those seas were shark-infested and I did not understand then that there wasn't a chance in a hundred of big shark coming close in shore. But I never hesitated. A shark seemed a friendly little risk in comparison with being picked up by a firing squad, and so I took a run and a clean header into the water and was swimming arm over arm as hard as I could go for the boat with the Red Ensign.

The mate in charge must have seen me dive. At all events, his fellows bent to the oars with a will and presently they hoisted me over the side, a little scarecrow of a foreign soldier boy in dripping rags. And they came alongside in nice order while the mate was still scratching his head at the discovery that I was answering his questions in frantic, unmistakable and desperately profane English.

The squad of Brazilian troops had come to a halt on the wharf edge at the same time, and two officers dashed forward with a frenzy of waving arms and a shouted gabble of words that held "prison-*naire*!" as its intelligible keynote.

The mate, George Blake, a West Countryman with slow blurred speech, had me huddled up in the bottom of the boat, shivering at his knees. He had not had time to learn much about me, but he knew I was an English lad and on his boat under his protection. He was coming ashore that day to rustle up a crew of cattlemen to look after the steers then being shipped home—it was before the days of cold storage for the English market.

He bit hard on the stem of his briar pipe, removed it from between strong, irregular teeth, and grinned upwards at the gesticulating officers on the quayside.

Mr. George Blake jerked his pipe stem over his shoulder at the tattered and dirty ensign flying in the stern.

"This 'ere boy," he said slowly, "is an English lad and that there's the Red Ensign. I don't know what he may 'ave done, but he've come aboard my boat, an' if you want the laad, you'd better fetch 'un."

With the words he produced a huge old revolver and laid it lovingly across his knees. The Brazilian officers waved their hands faster than ever and broke into a perfect torrent of explanation. George Blake put his pipe back between his teeth, listened very gravely, and went on nursing that huge revolver. He never made any further reply, and presently the two officers shrugged despairing shoulders, drew off, argued together for a moment, and then ordered the squad to the right about and marched away.

Blake left me in charge of two sailors, completed his business ashore and finally returned to the boat with three or four "Dago" cattlemen.

Two days later I was homeward bound for England still no more than a boy in years but able to take my trick at the wheel with any able-seaman among them all and profoundly contemptuous of the cattlemen to whom the Red Ensign was but a foreign flag.

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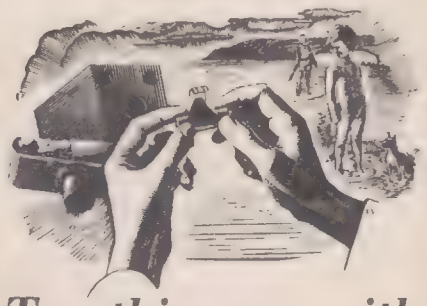

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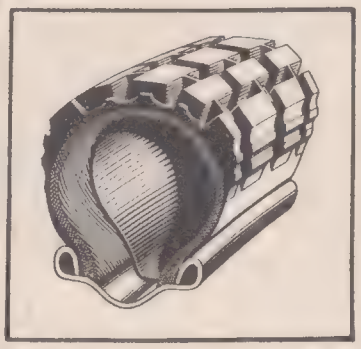

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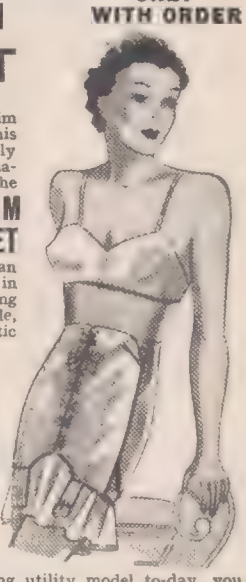

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SHORT SHORT STORY BY

Spencer Cooper

Illustrated by Colin Orme

She unscrewed the cap of the flask—it was water!

Drinking WATER

"WIMMEN!" the Dock Master pronounced, "They'll always be a licker to me!" Through his office window he studied the tide-gauge beside the lock gates, as though reassured by contemplation of something so regular and dependable.

"A licker to me!" he repeated. "Listen to this—it'll show you what I mean!"

◆ ◆ ◆

You'll never have heard of the loss of the *Plato*, of course. She was a pigeon-breasted, under-engined, fifteen-hundred ton misfit—crank as they're made and rotten with years of neglect. She was my first packet after I got my second's ticket.

We used to work between Beirut and Genoa, with an occasional sidestep to Alexandretta or Tripoli in search of a cargo. And we could carry eight passengers, whenever our cheap rates proved attractive enough to blind 'em to the discomforts. Our last trip we left Beirut with six—an old boy and his middle-aged daughter, English; another younger English woman with two children; and a fat Frenchwoman with dyed hair who the rest of 'em ignored completely. The one certainty about the whole lot of 'em was that they were pretty hard up to have to make the trip in the *Plato*.

There wasn't much doubt about that as far as the old boy and his daughter were concerned. Gilchrist, their name was. He must have been all of seventy.

She was about forty-five and one of those mousy women. The moment she was out of sight you couldn't remember what she looked like. All the luggage they'd got between them was one of those wicker baskets held together by a rug-strap. Oh, and a rucksack! Mustn't forget the rucksack! We guessed that held anything valuable they had, because the old boy used to keep it slung over his shoulder, meal times and all.

We soon learnt that he was some kind of clergyman, and the one desire of his life had been to make a trip to Palestine. He'd been saving for it for years. As I say, he was one of those intense people who can't take things easy. Well, it seemed that he wasn't able to make the trip until some of his congregation had a whip round and got some cash together, and with what he'd saved, that just did it. Now he was on his way home again, simply bursting with gratitude, and able to talk about nothing else.

The first night we ran into one of those summer gales you get off the tail end of Crete, and the passengers just folded up and suffered. The old *Plato* threw herself about as if she was crazy.

We kept hammering away at it all next day, and just after it got dark, what we'd been afraid of—happened. The weight was out of the wind by then, but there was a big regular sea running, the exact wrong size for us.

We climbed up one of 'em, over the top, and pitched down the other side. Up came the screw, raced a moment, then there was a row up out of the engine room like a kid kicking over a pile of empty cans. The screw had gone, and the engines raced themselves into scrap.

Away fell her head, of course, and we started to roll—each one as if she never meant to come up again. The third time over, the foremast went out of her like a dead twig. And at the same time a scalded greaser came screeching out of the engine room that the stern gland was torn out of her and water coming in like it was the main condenser inlet.

We knew just how long that engine room bulkhead would stand when all the Mediterranean leant against it—so it was a case of boats! And the *Plato's* boats would have been promotion to any Board of Trade inspector!

By this time the passengers were on deck, scared into life again, and I saw old Gilchrist and his daughter. He still had his rucksack, but he took it off and hung it round the daughter's neck.

"It will be women and children first, Mary," he said, "so I give this into your care. You must guard it as *I* would have guarded it!"

The daughter began to argue, but there was no time for chat, with the ship going heavy under us. I grabbed hold of her and bundled her into a boat. There were four of the crew in it, and I passed the two children in. I'd turned round for the mother when some fool let the boat's falls go with a run. By luck we were rolling the right way, and she hit the water with a smack, far out from the side. There was a yell from the wing of the bridge: "Take charge of that boat!" so I jumped for the falls and went shinning down. The ship still hung that way and I thought she'd roll over on us. "Pull for your lives, you tinkers!" I yelled, and we got clear.

We rode pretty comfortably on that big sea, climbing up the hills and down into the valleys again. But it was as black dark as Hell's throat. I lay to, watching the ship's port bowlight, for the electrics were out long since. Then after about fifteen minutes there was only black night where the red light had been and I knew she'd gone. When daylight came there was not a thing in sight.

We knew then how small an open boat can be in the middle of the sea. We'd be flung up so's we could see the horizon for a glimpse, then we'd be down in the trough again, buried. I gave out the ship had wirelessed an "S O S", but when the mast went over I'd seen the aerials hanging judas, and I knew there was no hope of it, and all that first day we didn't even sight a wisp of smoke. The equipment of that boat was something to cry over. No sails, no water, one tin of mouldy biscuit, and three doubtful hand-flares. But not one thimbleful of water!

Miss Gilchrist, though, showed what she was made of. The way she mothered those two little girls was fine to see. She had them cuddled up to her, one each side, under my coat rigged up to give them a little shade. Before long, of course, they were saying they were thirsty, and that made it worse for the rest of us, but she hushed 'em up, telling 'em stories. Low, attractive kind of voice she had, and she went on, hour after hour, making up stories for them.

That night we saw the lights of three ships, but they were all far down to the south and, of course, the flares wouldn't light.

Then the sun came swinging up on us again and we really did begin to suffer. Our mouths were hanging open and quite dry inside, and our lips were beginning to swell. And the two little girls felt it worst. They lay huddled against Miss Gilchrist, one each side, and she sat between them, looking up at the sky with her lips moving. I guessed she was praying, and I began to hope pretty seriously that she knew the right words to use.

When she'd done, she swung round the rucksack she'd been wearing all this time and began to fumble with the strap. She got it open, felt inside, and brought out a metal flask. She unscrewed the cap—and it was *water*! Water, that she'd been keeping in reserve until now.

She poured a little into the mouth of each child, and at sight of it I must have made some movement, because she snatched the flask to herself and faced round on me like a tigress.

"Only the children," she croaked, and gave each little girl another mouthful. It was wonderful how it revived them. The elder snuggled up to her and murmured: "Tell us about the fairies again!"

She was game, that woman. She made a great effort at it, but her voice was gone and she could hardly whisper. So I said: "You'll have to drink as well. Those children are relying on you."

She glared at me as if it was no business of mine. But then she saw the force of what I said. With a throat like a lime-kiln she couldn't go on talking, and it was her stories that were keeping those kiddies going. So she took a drink herself.

Well, the rest of that day went by somehow, with Miss Gilchrist telling stories on and on in a hoarse whisper, and the flask gradually being emptied.

At last, some time in the first dog, a ship sighted us. We could see her beginning to alter course, turning, turning until there was no doubt about it, and then—there she was, close above us, and we were picked up. I can tell you, that was one of the moments you remember.

I'd got a pretty good respect for Miss Gilchrist by then, and was sort of watching her after we got on board. That was why I saw her, almost the first thing she did, refill her flask from a water jug in the saloon. Later on I was with her when the ship, searching around, found a second boat with her father in it.

They came aboard in much the same state as we had, but her father, scarcely able to stand, made a bee-line for her.

"Is it safe?" he croaked, and for answer she swung the rucksack forward and handed it to him. His sun-cracked face broke into a painful smile of wonderful relief. "Through agonies of thirst, I knew it was safe with you!" he whispered.

I suppose I must have been staring, because the old boy opened the rucksack and held out the flask for me to see.

"Water from the Jordan!" he croaked triumphantly. "Through great tribulation we shall bring it safe to my church!" Then he went down in a faint, still clasping the flask.

◆ ◆ ◆

"And she let him go on thinking it!" the Dock Master concluded, shaking his head. "Wimmen, they're a licker to me!"

Post Office HOLD-UP

by B.L. Jacot

TO get at the works of the clock you had to unscrew a brass cover at the back. The cover was the size of a small saucepan lid, and the thread of the screw was fine—possibly to exclude dust, for it was a fine French clock in ormolu and alabaster. Dan Pedlar liked to imagine that his thick fingers denoted mechanical genius, thwarted in his case. He could never resist the temptation of taking things to pieces.

For all his size and heavy proportions his touch was light. He had just bought the clock along with one or two other oddments from Miss Tudway who was moving house in the village, and as he bent over it on the well-scrubbed deal table in the long, stone-flagged kitchen at the back of his farmhouse he was telling himself that he wagered it had not been opened for years.

It had not, in fact, been opened for twenty-one years and eight months. Miss Tudway, the postmistress, could have given you the period to a day, if she had thought about it; but what was there to recall exact dates to her mind? The new bungalow was much smaller than the old house in the High Street, and she had decided to get rid of much of the furniture that had come to her on her mother's death.

Five pounds was what Dan Pedlar had paid her for the clock, and it was probably well worth that sum, but the big man was not too sure he had not acquired it partially out of romantic reasons. A farmer-butcher, well-known in the hills, Dan had nursed a secret tenderness for Miss Tudway over a number of vanishing years. That he had never managed to do anything about it is easily explained by considering Miss Tudway.

If you have ever telephoned from London to Lurbing, Inchmer, or Filstone, the last official voice on your toll call to the Chiltern Hills was Miss Tudway's. Her shop in the High Street of Inchmer —the only street and not a long one, at that—lies at the end of a short path across her front garden. A large white notice board, lettered in black, states: *Inchmer Post Office*, and a public call-box, planted in cement between the thatch of the roof and the box hedge lends visible support to that statement.

Sweets in large glass bottles and strips of liquorice like boot laces share a window along with the tins of floor polish, gum boots in bundles and a sprinkling of fragile-looking tin kettles. The inside of the shop smells of biscuits and kerosene, but the counter devoted to Post Office business is of new oak and there is, surprisingly, a gleaming chromium-plated grill as a protection against smash-and-grab.

The door as you enter sends an old-fashioned kitchen bell dancing and cavorting at the end of a curved spring as if all the houses of the City of London were on fire, so that on meeting Miss Tudway the first move is contemplative, a smile and exchange of glances while you wait for the dog-like din of her bell to expire. Custom is not frequent and in the intervals Miss Tudway attends to the switchboard and sixty-three telephone numbers of her area in the sitting-room to the right of the shop. Any business you may be transacting is liable to interruption by a summons from the switchboard.

You could easily understand that Dan Pedlar, a bachelor and a lonely man at that, would be nervous in approaching Martha Tudway about buying her clock. Miss Tudway was a fine-looking woman still. Her voice had a natural refinement defeating the Chiltern burr, but it was her hands and the rare clearness of her complexion that attracted your attention. Her skin was ivory-white, blue-veined, and the slim wrist and long, fragile fingers gave her a cultured, nun-like look which her quiet manners and air of good-breeding seemed to confirm.

In a primitive sort of village, lost in the Chiltern Hills, you could never suspect Miss Tudway of anything coarse or rustic. She had an air of immaculacy only rarely achieved by the ageing spinster. Her mother was a lady's maid up at the Hall, married to a butler, and she had left her daughter a house and some little property. It was reflected in the staid and respectable outlook of Miss Tudway. She could easily have been the headmistress of some exclusive Victorian boarding school for young ladies, as far as appearances went.

Dan Pedlar was over six feet in height, with enormous shoulder muscles and hands. His complexion was that of a butcher—rosy-red as any apple-cheeked maiden; and with his gleaming white teeth, slow smile, and blue-grey eyes, it was not at all unnatural to realise that Dan had a cow's-lick of blond hair plastered down his forehead. His favourite headgear was a straw hat which he wore on the back of his head. He was a lonely man, retiring and without much to say for himself, but he was known for many a mile over the hills as a straight dealer and a man to be trusted. Martha Tudway was a beautiful girl in her day. Dan had known her in those distant times.

When the bell had done with its jangling earlier that afternoon, Danny Pedlar had grinned at Miss Tudway and made a vague sweeping motion in the neighbourhood of his cow's lick.

"I heard you were thinking of selling a few of your things," he mumbled, "and I thought——"

"I've got all I'm thinking of letting go in the back room, Mr. Pedlar," she told him. "Would you like to look over them?"

"Thank you kindly." In that back room something akin to panic took Danny. It was near enough ten years since he had been so close to Miss Tudway without having other people about. "I'd like to take the clock, if so you can spare it," he decided. He wondered how he should broach the matter of price. But he need not have bothered.

"Five pounds," stated the postmistress. "It's a valuable piece."

The yapping of the bell interrupted and Danny stood examining the clock with an ear taking in what was happening in the shop. A stranger to the district, well-spoken, was apparently asking the postmistress about the telephone facilities. Danny saw him in his car as he made his way out with his purchases—a good-looking youngster in his twenties; with him in the car was a foreign-looking young woman who was smoking a cigarette in a long holder.

Although less than fifty miles from London, Inchmer has been lost for centuries in the hills and beech woods. Strangers still bring a silence to small talk and the motionless, suspicious appraisal one animal will use protectively against another. Danny wondered who these two young folks were and what they were up to, following their expensive car until it disappeared over the humpbridge at the end of the village street.

Branyters Farmhouse lies back above the valley in an angle of the beech woods, and is reached by a twisting lane so narrow that vans must use a track over the pasture. From the windows of Danny Pedlar's kitchens the village of Inchmer is a crusted streak along the valley bottom, with its grey flint-built cottages, its thatch, the long chimneys of the Elizabethan vicarage showing through the yew trees. As he worked away at the clock Danny was thinking of Martha Tudway as she used to be when he first knew her.

With his father, a tenant-farmer, Danny had started a butcher's shop and a delivery round as a young man. He had five shops now in the neigh-

ILLUSTRATED BY JACK M. FAULKS.

The light of the candle showed Danny Miss Tudway's terrified face—and an automatic.

bouring villages and used his farm for grazing chiefly. He had never been much of a fellow for making a show, but he wished he might have been, for Martha Tudway's sake, in those early days. Even then, Martha had little to do with anyone in the village. It was thought that she would go to London or Wycombe or Oxford, but she never went. She stayed in the village, but her aloofness set her apart.

Thought of those days recalled Sidney Raft to the man at the table. At one time Sidney had been a great friend of Danny, but no young farmer with a growing business on his hands could have kept up with Sid.

There was a boy who would fight anyone as soon as look at him! Born for trouble—not that he cared. He was the sort of man a girl would always look at. Sidney Raft could do what he liked with any of them, and never did a thing. He drank a lot and worked in spasms. There had been trouble with the police in the end, and no one—not even Danny, his best friend—knew what had happened to him. Overnight he disappeared. No one had heard a word of him since.

Rising from his chair, Danny lit the oil lamp and for a while contemplated his clock in admiration. It was a decorative piece. The gilt base, supported on six carved claws, was upholstered in sky-blue velvet, upon which rested the legs of the alabaster pediment.

Medallions in the Sevres tradition gave miniatures of beautifully-busted women, and he peered at these in the lamplight, showing delicately against the panels of blue and gold filigree. The face of the clock itself showed as the end of a golden barrel surmounting the alabaster. Above it a great eagle spread his gilt wings, while to one side reclined the draped figure of a woman holding up a cup to the bird's outstretched beak.

The pendulum had unhooked itself in removal, but it was growing late when he returned to his original task of getting the cover off the back to replace the hook. It had taken a long time cleaning the porcelain of the medallions and the ormolu, for as he worked he was reminding himself that Martha Tudway had always been "above" such local youths as might have been her beaux. In fact, on the pedestal on which Danny had long ago placed her, Miss Tudway in her cold aloofness had taken on the halo of the unattainable.

He had dreamed until past midnight when he at length opened the back of the clock and found the envelope.

At a quarter to ten o'clock each evening Miss Tudway locked and bolted the shop door and the back door of her house and retired to her couch bed in the back room. At her bedside was the night switchboard, so arranged that the bell of a call woke her and she was able to make the necessary connection without getting out of bed. Night calls were rare. The only calls to wake her generally came from the Hall, but since the mansion had been empty now for some months, except for the caretaker, Hilliard, Miss Tudway's rest had not been disturbed.

That night the clamour of the bell broke into her sleep, and as, moved by long habit, she groped for the plug in the dark to pull it out while she lit her candle, she noted that the time as shown on her luminous clock was 12.20 a.m.

She saw at once that the call, curiously, came from the call-box outside her front door; and, trained in the recognition of voices without seeing a face with which to connect them, she knew that she had heard the voice before. It was the voice of a man.

"I've been trying to knock you up," he apologised. "But I couldn't make anyone hear. There's been a road accident down the village. My car. Lady hurt. I want to get a doctor, but I'd like to bring her into the house first. She's here with me. I carried her as far as this, and——"

"I'll open the door as soon as I get some clothes on," the postmistress cut in, wide awake now. "I hope it's—it's not serious. . . ."

Draught from the open door made her candle swoop and flicker as the midnight visitors stumbled into Miss Tudway's shop. A dead quiet lay over the village, and the night outside was black as velvet. A young man was half carrying, half dragging an attractive girl who seemed to the postmistress to be barely conscious.

"In here," Miss Tudway directed, and the man set his burden down on the bed-couch beside the switchboard. "Why—you came into my shop this afternoon!"

"Same fellow," the young man acknowledged briefly, then swinging round walked back to shut the door of the shop, cursing softly as he set the bell jangling anew.

Startled, Miss Tudway heard the noise of the bolt going home, but she had no time to think for the girl on the couch suddenly sat up and began to pat her hair, pulling her hat more firmly on her head.

"Listen!" ordered the man as he re-entered the room. "No harm is coming to you, so don't get alarmed. I've got to ask you to do something for me, and I don't see that you can do anything except oblige me—in the circumstances."

A hard tone in his voice sent a chill of fear down Miss Tudway's spine. She was alone in the house, and might as well have been alone in the countryside, for it takes something in the nature of an earthquake to rouse a Chiltern village in the middle of the night.

"Circumstances?" she echoed weakly.

A cap was pulled well down over the man's eyes; she could not see much of his face in the candlelight. His hands were deep in the pockets of a raincoat, and the postmistress was sure he had a revolver. "You've got to ring up the caretaker at the Hall. You know him, he's a local man. Hilliard. Chauffeur when the family's in residence. Am I right?"

Miss Tudway nodded. Her lips were dry.

"He knows you well and would recognise your voice?"

"Yes." The girl was watching her closely, too. "But, the accident——"

"There was no accident. We had to get in here quietly. The job we're on doesn't allow you to make much noise, so I must apologise for that." He glanced at a wrist watch. "At 12.30 you have to telephone to the Hall and tell the caretaker Hilliard that he has to meet the 1.57 train at High Wycombe. Tell him a delayed telegram has just arrived from Crewe and that his boss, Sir Geoffrey, is arriving on that train. He's done that before, hasn't he?

(continued overleaf)

Continuing

POST OFFICE HOLD-UP

Arriving suddenly from America in the middle of the night?"

The postmistress nodded. "Telegrams don't—" she began, when the man cut her short.

"He'll believe what you say. He knows you're the postmistress. We can't waste time arguing. Tell him he has to meet that train. My friend here is going to stop with you while he goes to the station, see?"

A slight flush had come to Miss Tudway's cheek, now that the surprise of it was receding. A touch of spirit that would have astonished Danny Pedlar showed in her eyes making her look less like an elderly schoolmistress.

"Why do you want me to do this?" she demanded.

"We have business up at the Hall. Now you had better get busy. I shall be just behind you, listening to what you say."

Only eighteen months ago when the old baronet died, and his young nephew succeeded to the estate at the Hall, the pictures and plate, all the village knew, were valued for probate in five figures. Miss Tudway knew that these visitors were thieves. Burglars.

"You're thieves," she said sharply. "Both of you."

"What I am," the man said, moving closer, "is nothing to do with you. Do as you're told, and you won't get damaged. Get busy!"

The girl had moved to stand on the other side of her. Miss Tudway thought quickly. It was no use screaming. To struggle against them would be futile. What could she do?

"Why do you want me to do this?" she asked. "I—I shall know who did it."

"You'll never see us again, don't you worry! And we happen to know that this fellow, Hilliard, has a licence to carry a gun—and carries half a dozen. The place is wired to wake him if anyone gets in anywhere. We don't want trouble so we're looking to you to get him safely and neatly out of the way for an hour or so. Does all that satisfy you?"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. I'm not going to do it!"

"Oh?" Stepping quickly up to her he caught up her arm and with a twist bent her straight back, almost double. "I can make you if I get nasty, and this is no picnic. Well?"

He twisted again and the pain brought a smothered scream to her lips. The girl's face was white when the postmistress straightened up. She was looking into the man's eyes, half afraid, and that look settled Miss Tudway's problem.

Trembling, she seated herself on the edge of the couch and picking up a plug pushed it into the socket, adjusting the headphone over her ear with the other hand.

Reaching from where he stood over her, the man placed a slip of paper in front of her on the ledge of the switchboard. "Read him that," he ordered. "And remember I'll be listening to what he says, too."

Miss Tudway glanced at the words as she listened to the ringing tone sounding in her earphone. "Travelling from Liverpool," the message read. "Meet 1.57 train at High Wycombe without fail. Swayne."

For an age, it seemed to the postmistress, silence fell over the little room lit by the flickering candle. One moment she hoped Hilliard would not answer her call, the next she hoped he would hurry, for she did not know what would happen to her if he failed to answer. There was little of the pride and reserve about her then that so awed Danny Pedlar.

The girl spoke in a whisper to the man standing at Miss Tudway's elbow, and he motioned her to silence. In the pause that followed the postmistress could hear the dull thud-thud of her heart beats, then over the wire came the click of a receiver taken up and a man's sleep-thickened voice: "Hello?"

Miss Tudway drew a deep breath. "This is the postmistress," she announced. "I have a delayed telegram that has just come in to me here. . . ."

Vague clicking noises came, then the voice more clearly: "Just a minute. Who's that, did you say?"

"This is Miss Tudway, the postmistress. There's a telegram for you, just come in. It's from Sir Geoffrey. Shall I read it to you?"

"From Sir Geoffrey?" The grumbling note disappeared from the chauffeur's voice. This sort of thing had happened before, and Hilliard was accustoming himself as best he might to the changed mode of life the new baronet had introduced at the Hall.

The postmistress read him the message, and, commenting on his luck on being called out at all hours, the chauffeur rang off.

"I think you'd better sit in this chair," the man in the raincoat advised Miss Tudway when she had pulled out the plug. "I want to make you as comfortable as possible." He was unwinding a length of cord.

"You're—you're going to tie me to the chair?"

"Not taking any chances. Who knows? You might break loose on my friend here, who's going to be with you. Come on!"

He tied her securely to the chair and, taking his companion's scarf, bound it round her mouth. "It will only be for an hour or so. I'm going to come back and release you. Do what you like then, it will be too late." To the girl he said: "Better do without the light. You never know who may chance to see it."

It was as he stopped to extinguish the candle that a heavy step sounded at the porch outside, followed by a moment's shuffling, as if someone were trying to make up his mind, then a gentle knocking.

In the little back room the atmosphere immediately became tense. The girl instinctively clung to the man's arm. He shook her off impatiently, while he listened intently for further sounds.

The knocking was repeated after a long pause.

"What's this?" the man whispered in the postmistress's ear. But she shook her head. Miss Tudway had no idea. Her head was singing and she thought she was going to choke.

He began to whip off her bonds. "See to it," he whispered fiercely, "and don't let anyone in here. If you try to give us away, it will be the last thing you do." He pushed an automatic pistol under her nose.

Pushing weakly to her feet Miss Tudway made her way through the shop and once again unbolted the door. The door pushed open quickly and a heavy figure stepped furtively inside the shop, closing the door firmly behind it. For a while the bell clamoured deafeningly.

"*Mr. Pedlar!*" gasped the postmistress, when it stopped.

"Ssh!" warned Danny. "It's all right. I got the note, and no one's seen me!"

In the darkness he loomed over her like a mountain. The bulk of him steadied her, but still she wanted to scream.

A voice cut in behind them. "What's all this? What note? Better be careful, I've got you covered."

The girl followed her companion into the shop and the light of the candle showed Danny Miss Tudway's terrified face. It showed him, too, the young man with the automatic. Things happened quickly then.

With a heave Danny Pedlar hurled an inkpot at the gunman, and a fraction of a second later he hurled his huge body. An explosion rent the air, glass splintered, the candle fell and went out. And on the linoleum arms and legs flailed.

It was Miss Tudway who lit the candle at length, and she saw among the debris of her stock-in-trade Danny Pedlar sitting on the chest of the gunman. The girl was crouching against the wall.

"Better tie them up, Danny," the postmistress advised, surprisingly using his Christian name. "There's cord in the back room."

She fetched it, and under her directions Danny tied them up. "Where's Sid?" Danny asked when he had done.

"Sid?"

"Sidney Raft."

She shook her head. "I don't know what you mean. But wait till I've telephoned for the police then I'll tell you what happened."

In the light of an oil lamp she had lit, Danny sat on the oak counter. He was bewildered. From his pocket he pulled out an envelope and read over again the message it contained. There was a queer light in his eyes when he held Miss Tudway's gaze as she came back from her telephoning.

"They're coming along," she said quietly, then, sitting primly beside him, she explained the night's happenings. There was nothing aloof about the way she turned to him at the end and asked him simply: "What brought you to the shop at this hour, Danny?"

He pulled his scattered wits together. "Why, the note."

"What note, Danny?"

He pulled the envelope from his pocket. "The note Sid sent you this afternoon. You put it in the clock, and forgot it when I carried it to the farm. . . ."

Still holding his puzzled eyes, she took the note from him, and read it.

"I skipped the first part," he mentioned awkwardly, and she nodded without looking up.

"My Darling Marty," the note read, "I'm in terrible trouble and don't want to be seen in the village, not by anyone except you and Danny, who is one of the best ever. You have been a real pal to me all along, and I shall never, never forget it, sweetheart. There is only one woman for me, and you know who she is. I have got to see you, so expect me when all is quiet. I will tap on your window about midnight. Let Danny know. I want to see him particular."

It was signed "Sid."

For a long while Miss Tudway sat perfectly still. In the light of the oil lamp her skin looked almost transparent, but when, at length, she handed the letter back to Danny her hand was steady as a rock.

"I never read that note Danny," she told him. "You would have seen that if—if Sid had stuck the flap down."

He moistened his lips. This was no queenly figure watching him so steadily. The postmistress, even in her forties, was all of a woman—and hadn't Sid Raft been her lover? Darling Marty. . . .

"Then Sid has been? He's gone without seeing me?"

She glanced over her shoulder towards the man and woman bound in the back room. "Sid went away twenty years ago," she said, dropping her eyes now to her lap. "I haven't seen or heard of him since. I didn't know he was going. That note must have been to let me know."

"Then he—I don't understand quite."

"Nor did I until I had time to think it out. He must have put that note inside the clock, not risking writing to me through the post. I remember now just before he went, he repaired the clock for me at his father's shop in Filstone—you remember the shop?"

Danny nodded. Sid should have been an ironmonger by trade.

"That note has been waiting for me for twenty years inside that clock, and I never knew it. Funny that it should have brought you along, after all this time, just when I—I needed you, Danny. . . ."

He found that he had drawn her nearer to him on the counter. At the back of his mind was only one clear thought, and, stupidly, that was that the clock must be air-tight, or else the note wouldn't have kept its ink and paper like new all these years.

"I might have come thirty years back," he heard himself saying in a voice he could scarcely recognise. "Not for the note like, but because—well, because I wanted to, Martha."

"You're talking nonsense, Mr. Pedlar," she said.

Danny swallowed deep in his broad chest in a way that made the parcels-scale register unladen at his side.

"The truest word I ever spoke," he protested hoarsely. "I always thought . . . that is, I imagined——"

"What?"

"That you wouldn't be wanting a fellow like me calling, Martha."

"You left it a bit late to find out. Why shouldn't I?"

"Oh!—not a rough fellow like me!"

"I was glad of it, ten minutes ago, Danny."

That beautifully slim, white hand was in his broad palm. The touch of it gave Danny confidence. "I was thinking just now that, since the ice is broken—you know—I might take it on myself to call."

"You might. You'd be welcome. If you think we've known each other long enough."

He was puzzling over her last remark when the roguishness of it reached him. Knuckling at the cow's-lick on his forehead, he grinned broadly. "Reckon I will, then, Martha."

His arm had begun to journey round the back of her shoulders when she slid from the counter. "This will be the police."

He followed her as the sound of running steps came from the garden path. "I'll open the door for them, shall I?" he asked, and when she nodded: "Reckon there'll be a deal of talking going on about this—and about you and me, I mean. Reckon I'd better leave it all to you, eh?"

She smiled at him in a way that made him look foolish. "Perhaps you had, Danny," was what she said.

Laughter

The "PASSING SHOW" Smile Section

"He's put a call through to Glasgow—he wants his mother to hear how he's improved on his bagpipe."

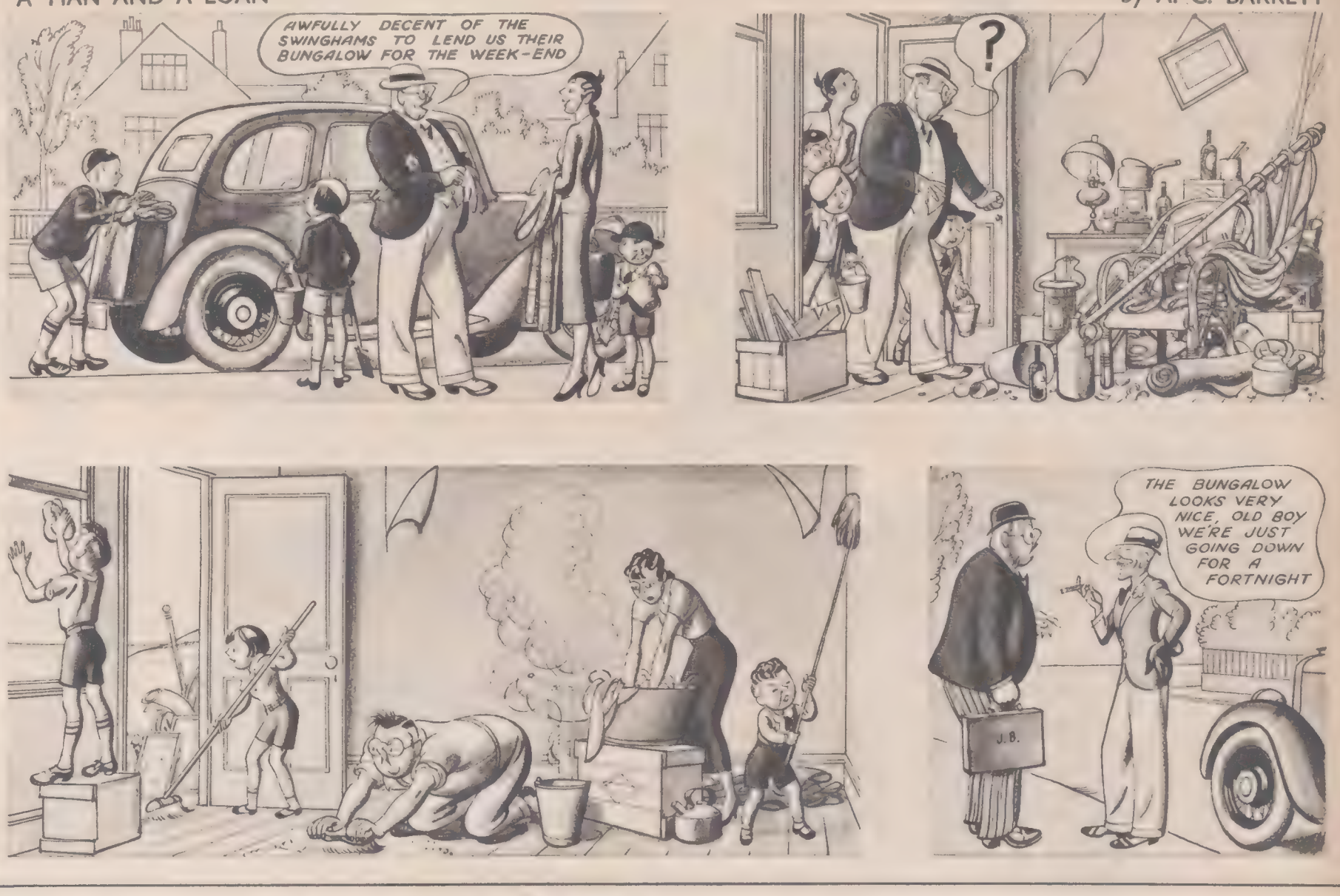
"Sorry, sir, but we're sold right out."

"Well, that's Land's End. Now let's try and get somebody at John o' Groats."

"What ? You've drunk all the ginger beer! Well, what are we going to launch 'er with ?"

A MAN AND A LOAN

by A. C. BARRETT



The zoo-keeper lays his crazy paving.

" No, dear, I haven't seen your shaving brush—but Rodney's horse has got a new tail."

" Now hand mother her putter, darling."

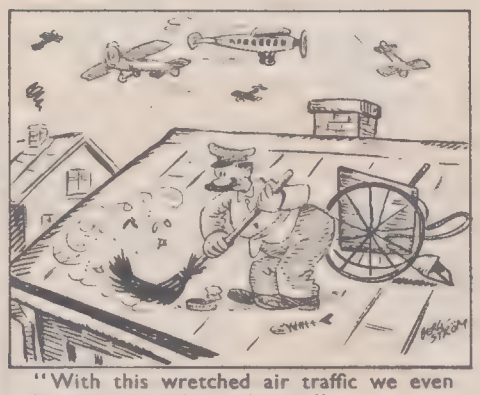
The R.A.'s model improves The Shining Hour.

" No, I don't want a car ; I just wanted to show Harold how the smart salesman of to-day dresses."

" Now, who's going to break the news to him ? "

LAUGH WITH THE WORLD

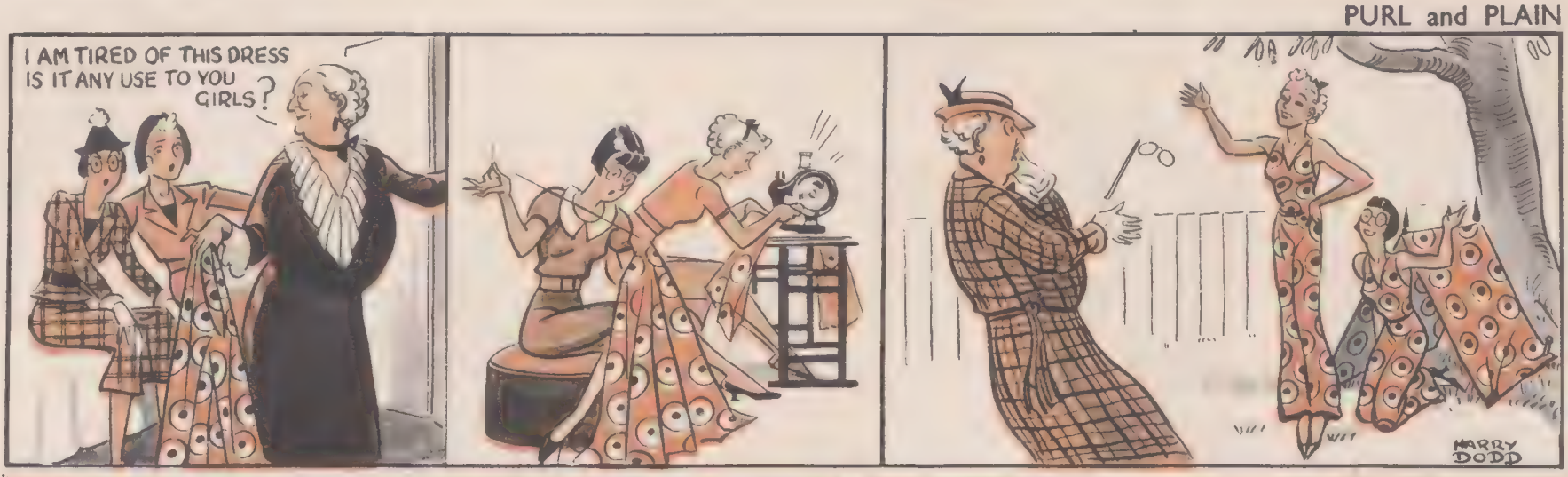
" Silly young idiot—why didn't you keep a look-out for us to get out at the right spot. Now we have to wait till six o'clock."
Wochenschau, Essen.



" With this wretched air traffic we even have to sweep the roofs now."
Söndagsnisse Strix, Stockholm.

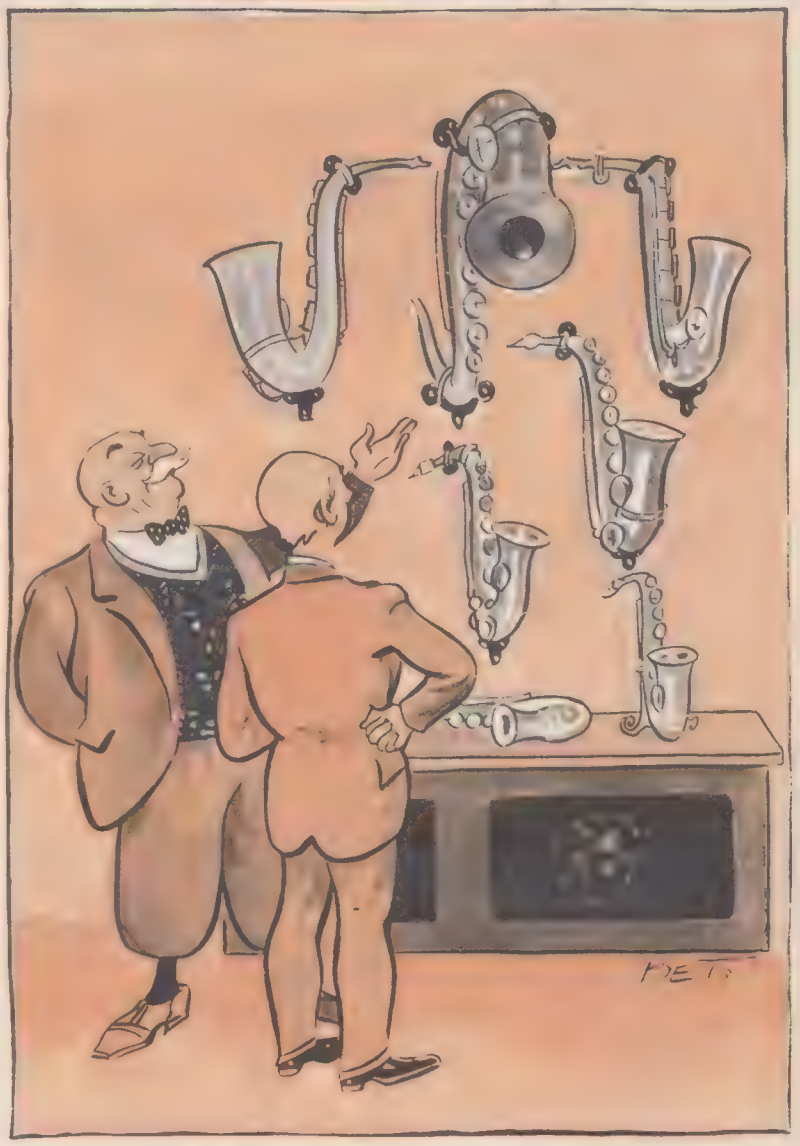
" If you want to play with us you must let your ice cornet be the pipe of peace."
Fliegende Blätter, Munich.

PURL and PLAIN



MABEL LUCIE ATTWELL says "WOT A LIFE!"

I cross me fingers as I peep
An' this is wot the wise folk say—
If you can say "good morning sweep—"
You'll have a lucky day!



"Oh, I got tired of shooting tigers."

OLD BILL and BERT

by BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER

ENJOY A VISIT TO MADAME TUSSAUD'S

WORLD FAMOUS EXHIBITION

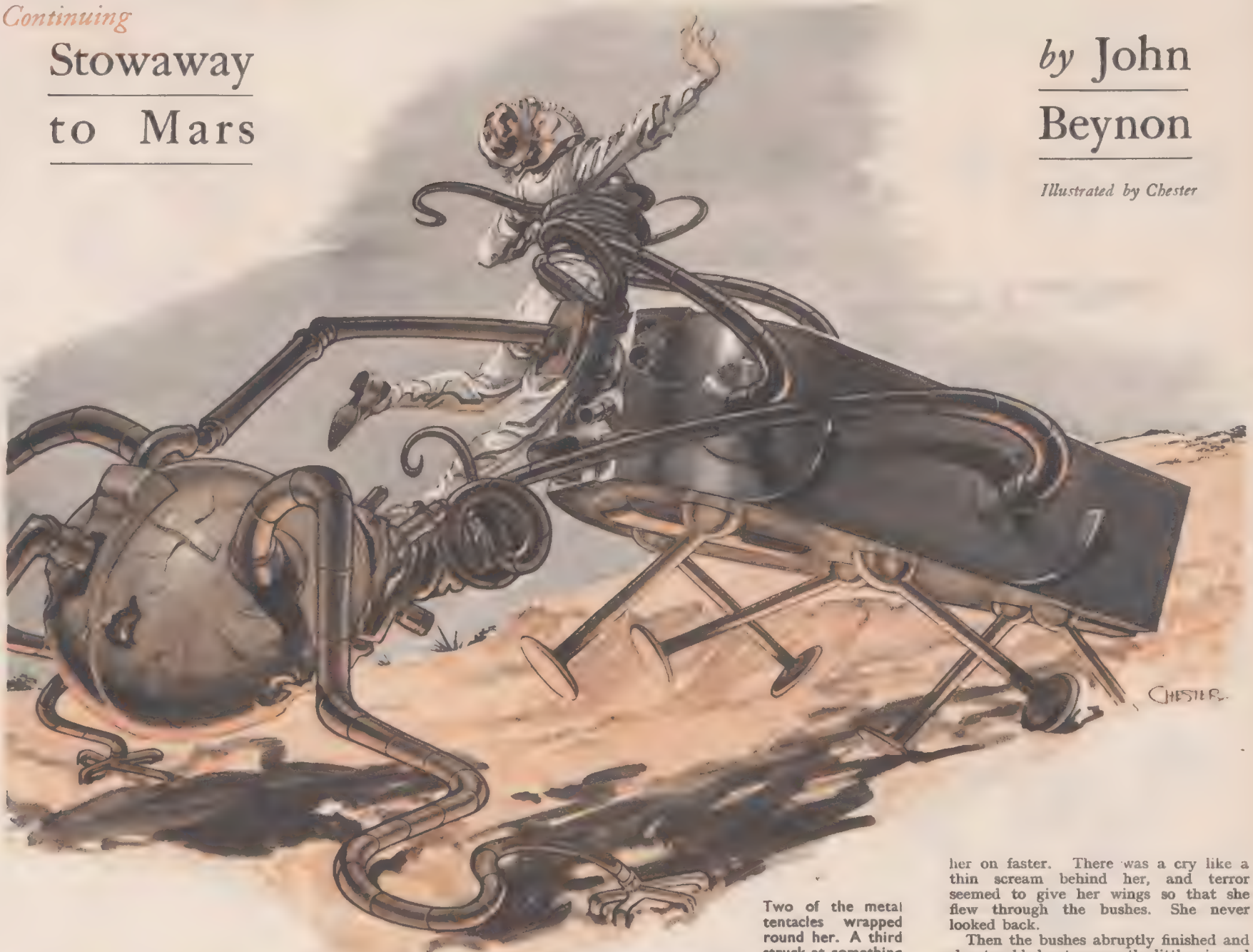
A feast of Entertainment

Continuing

Stowaway to Mars

by John Beynon

Illustrated by Chester



Two of the metal tentacles wrapped round her. A third struck at something behind . . .

KIDNAPPED *by a* MACHINE

READ THIS FIRST

Seventy-four days after leaving earth the space-ship *Gloria Mundi*, designed and piloted by Dale Curtance, millionaire dare-devil aviator, reaches Mars. Equipped with rifles and oxygen masks, Dale and his crew—Burns, engineer; Froud, journalist; Geoffrey Dugan, and Doctor Grayson—leave their ship to explore the desert-like region in which they landed.

With them goes Joan Shirning, a beautiful stowaway. She has travelled to Mars to vindicate her scientist father who was ridiculed when he described the machine-like people living on the planet. While the *Gloria Mundi's* party is looking for signs of life, Burns, who has been unbalanced by the voyage through space, runs away with Joan. Later his mutilated body is found, and his companions are still looking for the girl when they see something that sends them hurrying to the sanctuary of a hilltop. Now read on.

JOAN, who was in front, had been the first to see the thing. They were in a hurry—at least, Burns was, and, in the circumstances, that meant that she was, too. He had waited just long enough to fire the single warning shot which had sent Dugan back to the rest before urging her swiftly on their way. His manner had changed. With the others safely out of sight, his confidence became displaced by a nervous anxiety to put the stout hull of the *Gloria Mundi* between himself and dangers known or unknown as soon as possible. She noticed, moreover, that he had put his pistol back in his pocket, and was holding one of the rifles ready for an emergency. The altered attitude increased her nervousness of the surroundings, but it made him seem more normal; and his eyes no longer held that cruel gleam which had made her feel weak almost to the point of panic.

As they hurried on, her thoughts ran ahead. She had nothing to fear from him now until they reached the rocket. But once inside it, with the outer door closed. . . .? They would take off their oxygen masks, then the padded overalls. She would have a chance to reach the pistol in her pocket.—That was it. While he was struggling out of his protective suit, her chance would come. It would put him at her mercy for a few necessary moments. And there must be no mistake. For the sake of the rest as well as for herself she could risk no mistake. . . .

The bushes around them were drier now; the ground underfoot sandier. Quite soon they would reach the open desert. It would not take long to reach. Then she had seen it. A glimpse of something glittering bluely which moved in the bushes to the right. She swerved wildly away from it. A kind of jointed rod swept out from it, barely missing her arm, and a sudden terror seemed to stab her in the chest. She sprang forward, running and leaping without daring to look behind. She heard Burns' cry of surprise. There was the sound of a shot and then a fusillade as the automatic rifle emptied itself. The noise drove her on faster. There was a cry like a thin scream behind her, and terror seemed to give her wings so that she flew through the bushes. She never looked back.

Then the bushes abruptly finished and she stumbled out among the little, wizened shrubs. But she did not check her headlong flight. She had no intention of stopping before the *Gloria Mundi's* door was safely shut between her and whatever had been in the bushes. Not until she was half-way across the sand did she catch sight of the things which were moving around the rocket. Then, in dismay, she checked herself. She could not risk going on to meet them, but she dared not face the bushes again. There was nothing for it, but to wait where she was. Dale and the rest must have heard the shots; they would be here soon. She looked round, searching for a hollow where she could lie hidden until they should come.

A sudden glitter on top of one of the rocky ridges away to her right caught her eye. She started, looking more attentively. It flashed again, without any doubt the reflection from a swiftly moving metal object. She stood rigidly watching it as it approached rapidly. Each time it breasted a ridge or a sandy hummock she could distinguish more details. Soon there could be no doubt that it was the counterpart of the machine in her photographs—with the difference that it scurried along on six legs instead of eight. Joan stood, waiting for it.

At twenty yards distance it stopped and turned its lenses on her. A series of sounds in metallic timbre came from one of the openings in its casing. In the thin air they sounded harsh and attenuated. Joan, after a moment's hesitation, advanced to a smooth patch of sand and wrote there a few characters with her forefinger. Then she stood back and waited.

The machine approached with no sound but the thudding of its six feet on the sand. It stopped close to the scratched characters, examining them carefully. Joan had written that she came from Earth, and peacefully.

(*continued on page* 28)

"Good Morning!"

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SHREDDED WHEAT

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Continuing

KIDNAPPED *by a* MACHINE

Again the metallic tones issued from its speaker. She smoothed the sand and began to write again.

"Write. I cannot understand speech."

One of the machine's four tentacles whipped forward. It scrawled swiftly:

"How do you know our writing?"

Laboriously, compared with the machine's swift action, Joan drew her reply.

"A machine came to Earth."

"Did it bring you? Where is it?" scribbled the machine.

"No, it was——" she hesitated—"broken," she finished.

She watched it as it began to write again. Suddenly, with no more than three characters completed, it stopped. Before she could guess its intention it had dashed forward. Two of the metal tentacles wrapped round her and lifted her. A third flashed out, striking at something behind her, and meeting it with a clang. Held as she was, she could not see what threatened. She was only aware of a jointed metal arm which whipped past her head and fell with a harmless clatter on the case of the machine which held her. The surprise was so complete; the action so unexpected as utterly to bewilder her. The next thing she knew was that she was travelling across the desert in the grasp of a machine which sped at a prodigious pace towards the south.

The four men lying prone on the top of the sandhill watched the string of metal machines which had emerged from the scrub. The creation which Joan's photographs had shown them had seemed weird, but these newcomers were a nightmare. They all felt a hysterical disbelief of their own senses: the things they saw must be a hallucination. Dugan, with an attempt at light-heartedness, said:

"I know what it is. Someone's been putting alcohol in my air supply." But his intended nonchalance was belied by the tremor in his voice.

Froud blinked at the mechanical cavalcade. He shook his head decidedly.

"I'm sorry, but I just don't believe it," he said.

No two of the machines were alike. They differed in shape, size and form both of their main casings and of their appendages. Some were spherical bodied, some cubical, some pyramidal, some rectangular and a few of the roughly coffin shape that Joan had described to them. The only point which they all held in common was that each moved upon struts of one kind or another; not a wheel was to be seen. Froud stared particularly at one egg-shaped monstrosity. It was supported on one side by two long jointed stilts which were splayed out widely to compensate for the three scurrying, but far shorter legs on the other side. Another, a torpedo-like contrivance, had only one leg on either side at the rear and upheld its forepart on a kind of skid. One of the spheres managed to get along on a tripod of unequal struts, clanking and clattering as it lurched about. Many of the cases were discoloured by smears of a kind of rust and patched in places with plates of non-matching metals; here and there one could see parts which had been painted, but not one of the machines was the same colour all over.

"Crazy, crazy, crazy. It can't be real," Froud repeated.

"If I read of this, I should throw the book away," said the doctor. "But it exists; it's real. There must be some kind of reason for it somewhere."

The ungainly machines spread out into a crescent formation and continued to approach, the faster reducing their speed to the lumbering pace of the slower.

"When I give the word," Dale said, "aim for their lenses—and go easy on the bullets, we've got none to waste."

"I suppose they *are* hostile," Froud put in; "but you remember what Joan said——"

"These aren't the things she talked about. Besides, I'm remembering what Burns looked like, and not taking any chances," Dale said.

He waited patiently. They were within sixty yards when he gave the order to fire.

The result of the first volley was unexpectedly gratifying. The advance stopped dead. One machine dropped to the ground with its metal legs splayed out around it. Another burst into fragments with a surprising concussion. A third ran amuck. It staggered, turned half round, then with tentacles flailing wildly and a great clanking proceeding from its loosely articulated parts, it set off drunkenly over the desert as fast as five ill-matched legs could carry it. Dale gave the order for a second round.

One more machine fell. The legs of a second jammed so that it ploughed round in a circle. The undamaged machines began to retire, dragging the injured with them. Froud dropped his rifle and seized a camera.

"Study of a flock of Whathaveyous in full retreat," he murmured.

"She was right about one thing—they can think," the doctor said. "They're not just remote control mechanisms—they're intelligent, self-contained machines."

"Maybe," Froud grunted, "but it seems to me precious like the kind of intelligence you find in mental homes, and I feel a bit that way myself. Damn it all, it can't be real—even here. It's—it's a kind of dream made of Lewis Carroll and Karel Kapek rolled together. There's no sense in machines like this. Just look at 'em. What the hell's the good of 'em?"

"Yes, but remember the one in Joan's photographs. It was all right. Queer as it looked to us, it was at least logically designed and all of a piece. Something's gone wrong with these. They aren't reasonable—sort of crazy bad jokes. Look at that square chap."

He pointed at one of the cubes. From its lower corners sprang two well-paired metal legs and one entirely dissimilar leg, while the fourth was upheld by a flexible tentacle. It was busily engaged in dragging away one of the broken machines by means of other tentacles protruding from three of its upper corners.

"I've got an idea about that. Keep your eye on it for a bit," advised Dale.

When it had reached what it evidently considered a safe distance, the cube stopped; a lens set in one of its sides was brought to bear, and it probed inquisitively about in the wreckage. Apparently satisfied, it lowered its own casing to the ground and began industriously to dismember the other machine. Five minutes later it stood erect again, but with a difference. It rested now upon four legs and four tentacles waved from its top corners. By taking a leg from its wrecked companion, it had been enabled to shift the jury-leg tentacle back to its rightful position. Now, apart from minor discrepancies in the length of the legs, it was complete and ready for anything.

"Well, that settles it. We're all quite mad," said Froud.

"Queer," muttered the doctor, "indecent, too, somehow.—A kind of mechanical cannibalism."

He watched another machine with ludicrously ill-assorted members approach the casualty and exchange a badly damaged tentacle for one in better condition.

"Do you suppose that the ultimate is a kind of super monster built entirely of spare parts?"

"Don't ask me anything," Froud told him. "I'm still feeling as if my middle name were Alice."

The surviving machines having stripped the fallen of all useful parts reformed their ranks and began to advance again.

"Same as before," Dale ordered.

The second repulse was almost a duplication of the first.

"It's easy. We'll be all right as long as the shots and the air hold out," he decided, "but God knows what's happened to Joan."

Joan's captor sped over the desert with scarcely a sound save the scraping of its metal feet on the coarse sand and an occasional clink as they struck fragments of stone. Only the faintest, low-pitched hum told of the machinery at work within the casing; machinery which was acting with a flawless accuracy and judgment beyond the capacity of any animal creation. Not once did it hesitate and not once did it err in placing the six hurrying legs. The smooth, relentless perfection of its progress over the rough ground was uncanny; every climb and every descent was made without a suggestion of a slip or stumble.

After her first shock she had struggled desperately, but, held as she was, it was impossible for her to reach the pocket where her pistol lay. In her panic she battered on the casing until her hands became sore even in their thick gloves, but upon the machine it had no effect whatever. After that, she relapsed into a fatalistic acceptance of the situation. At the rate they had travelled it would take her hours to find her way back over the desert. As far as she could, she resigned herself to face whatever fate the machine intended for her.

Once in the journey she had caught sight of a group of machines to the west; and they had seen her captor, too. They came scuttering awkwardly but speedily to investigate. Her machine swerved and put on speed. It left them behind easily. But the sight of them bewildered her even as, had she known it, a similar sight was bewildering Dale and the rest. The queer, distorted mechanisms which she had glimpsed did not fit in at all with the logical world she had pictured; and her machine had avoided them as if it were—well, afraid was obviously a foolish word to apply to a machine, but it had certainly made off with a speedy discretion, not dropping back to its earlier pace until they were out of sight. Was it one of such things, she wondered, which had so narrowly missed her in the bushes?

The sun sank, and a brief twilight quickly gave way to star-pricked darkness. It was strange to gaze up and see the stars looking again as they had looked from Earth: twinkling points in a bed of darkest blue, no longer flaring sparks in the utter blackness of space. The fading of the daylight seemed to have no effect upon the machine's judgment, for their pace was undiminished. Daylight, darkness or, subsequently, the cold deceptive rays of the Martian moons made no difference to its accuracy, but into Joan's mind that moonlight, flooding across the waste of shining sand and throwing clear-cut purple shadows beneath the rocks, drove still deeper the sense of desolation and decay.

It seemed to her that already they had been travelling for several hours, but there was no sign that this nightmare journey would ever finish; she began to fear that, for her, it would end in the air in her pack giving out. She would die, gasping for breath, and this metal monster would go rushing on across the desert, bearing only her corpse. She had not thought to ask Dale how long the air would last, and every moment became haunted by the fear that she might even now be drawing her last breath. Then, like a sudden message to rouse her out of her despondency, there came the glint of lights somewhere ahead. They showed only for a few seconds before the next rise blotted them out, but they gave her new hope. She thanked God that something somewhere on Mars had need of artificial light. . . .

A few more miles of desert fell behind and the machine's feet began to click upon a hard, level surface. A high, black bulk rose in front of them, cutting an increasing patch of darkness in the moonlit sky. The machine held straight on into the shadows. Tall walls reared up on either hand, shutting them into a trench of darkness. The sky overhead was suddenly blotted out. Of the lights she had seen there was now no trace. Not the faintest glimmer broke the pressing blackness. Yet there was a pervading sense of movement all about, of things which were stirring close by in a gloom which her frightened eyes tried in vain to penetrate. From time to time something would brush gently against her in passing and in her ears was a continuous pattering of metal upon stone, but try as she would, she could discern no more than an occasional deeper darkness—as likely as not, a trick of her straining eyes.

Then, at last, she saw the lights again. A turn brought them face to face with a tall building, its façade studded with glowing windows. At ground level a large open doorway poured a fan-shaped beam over the open space in front. By its light she was able to see a number of machines, similar to that which held her, hurrying to and fro. Without a pause she was hurried into a group of several

(*continued on page* 30)

I always look for the LIFEBUOY TRADE MARK on each packet .... have done so for forty years

I always look for the name Player's on the cigarette, and then I know it is a GENUINE PLAYER'S 'MEDIUM' NAVY CUT

N.C.C.340D.

Continuing

KIDNAPPED *by a* MACHINE

others which was approaching the doorway. Just across the threshold she was set down. A few metallic sounds issued from her machine's speaker, then it was gone, scurrying away into the outside darkness. A moment later massive doors slid together, cutting off all hope of escape.

Joan, stiff and giddy from her imprisonment in the constricting tentacles, leaned weakly against the wall while her circulation painfully restored itself. She looked about her with a mixture of curiosity and apprehension. The room was some thirty feet square, bare and cold. Two sides of it were formed of smoothly dressed, reddish stone, another by the doors through which she had entered, and the fourth, opposite them, by a pair of similar doors. For company she had some half-dozen of the six-legged machines. None of them paid any attention to her, and when after an apparently purposeless interval, the doors on the far side opened, they at once scurried busily away. Joan followed, wonderingly.

Her first impression was of a city of light within the city of darkness—an impression which, she was to find later, fell but little short of the truth. She entered a vast circular hall filled with light from sources which she could not detect.

The high roof was slightly domed and must, she thought, have been fully three hundred feet above her at its centre. The width of the place was fully twice its height. Broad balconies, interconnected in some places by staircases and in others by slopes, circled the walls at even intervals. From them arched openings led back into unseen passages or rooms. Round the ground-floor level a series of similar though larger arches was spaced, and between them in constant streams moved machines seeming perpetually in a hurry. She watched them awhile as they passed, some burdened, others with their tentacles coiled in rest, but all moving at a constant speed upon their unguessable errands.

The only sounds were the scuttering shuffle of their feet and the aggregate purring of the instruments within the casings. She watched them with a kind of absent wonder, at a loss to know what she should do next. The object which had driven her on to the *Gloria Mundi* had been accomplished. Now that she was free of the tentacles her fear of the machines had subsided, but she felt stranded and forlorn.

She wondered why they had brought her here, but because they were machines they were alien, and their motives were likely to be un-understandable. She was tempted to accost one and make it understand what she wanted. But what did she want? Not, certainly, to be carried back across those miles of desert with an ever-increasing fear of her air giving out. . . .

Then, abruptly, the decision was taken out of her hands. A touch on her arm caused her to turn, and she found herself face to face, not with a machine, but with a man.

For several seconds she stared at him without moving. So far from wearing protective clothing, he was clad only in a pair of kilted shorts made from some gleaming material and fastened about his waist by a worked metal belt. His skin was of a reddish tinge, his chest broad and deep, and he was but little taller than herself. His head, beneath its covering of black hair, was of quite unusual size, and the ears, though they were not unsightly and grew closely, were decidedly bigger than those of any Earthman. The rest of his features were unusual only for the fineness of their formation without suggesting weakness and their regularity without loss of character. The eyes were dark and yet penetrating. They seemed to suggest a faint long melancholy, yet they were not truly sad. A queer creature, she thought, but with a kind of charm. . . . Then, as she watched, there came a slight crinkling at the corners of the eyes and a friendly smile about his mouth. She never again thought of him as a "queer creature." . . .

He lifted one hand and signed that she should take off the oxygen mask, but she hesitated. It might be safe enough for him, but her lung capacity could scarcely compare with that beneath his great chest. He repeated the sign insistently, pointing back towards the doors through which she had come. It occurred to her for the first time that the purpose of the double doors must have been that of an airlock. She lifted her mask experimentally. It seemed all right; moreover, as she breathed without its assistance she realised that the air was not only denser within the building, but warmed. She slipped the mask right off with a sigh of relief. It became the man's turn to stare, and hers to return the friendly smile. He spoke. She guessed that he was using the same language as the machines, but his voice was full and pleasing. She shook her head, still smiling, but it was clear that the gesture was as unfamiliar to him as his words were to her. She ripped open the fastener of her suit impatiently and felt in her pockets. No pencil nor pen, but among other femininities almost unused during the voyage she found a lipstick: that would have to serve. She crouched down and explained her difficulty in carmine characters on the floor. The man understood: he took the lipstick from her and wrote an instruction for her to follow him.

The sun sank lower and the shadows stretched long distorted fingers across the desert as though the powers of darkness were reaching out to grasp the land. Desert and sky were repainted by the reddened glow, and even the bushes to the west lost for a few short minutes their dreary reality and underwent a fiery glorification. Presently the last arc sank below their tops; a few fugitive red gleams escaped between the swaying branches, and then night came. Through their padded suits the men from the *Gloria Mundi* felt something of the chill which crept across the Martian sands.

Four times the rank of machines had made a suicidal advance, and four times it had retreated to re-equip itself with parts of the fallen. Now it stood inactive, but ominous; a line of grotesque shapes in dim silhouette against the darkening sky.

The situation was telling on the four men. The very inhumanity of their enemies, their uncanniness and, above all, their unknown potentialities made it impossible for them to maintain the front they might have shown to normal dangers. Their minds seemed to alternate between contempt for mere undirected mechanism, and an exaggerated fear of it. The predicament was getting on their nerves.

The first moon, Deimos, slid up from the ragged horizon, and the sand turned silver beneath it. The polished hull of the ship glittered under it, seeming tantalisingly close, but the rank of machines also gleamed, drawn across the way. The moonlight seemed to invest the metal shapes with a harsher relentlessness, and the sharp shadows it cast from them were even more uncouth than the originals. The men lay silent, each racking his brains for a plan. Nearly two hours passed, and the night became brighter still.

"Lord, isn't that glorious?" Froud said.

The second moon, the smaller Phobos, raced up the sky, rushing to overtake Deimos. They looked up at it.

"What a speed! You can see it go." Dugan was the least impressed.

"You'd show speed, too, if you had to do the round trip in seven and a half hours," he said practically.

Dale rose suddenly to his feet.

"I've had enough of this. I'm going to make a break for it. You can cover me. Those machines must have packed up for the night. They've not moved since before sunset."

But he was wrong. He had gone less than a dozen yards before the rank stirred, clanking faintly in the thin air. He hesitated and advanced a further couple of paces.

"Come back," Dugan called. "You'll never be able to rush it at that distance."

Dale recognised the truth of it. Even with the increased speed and agility which Mars gave he would not stand a chance of escaping all the tentacles which would grope for him. He turned reluctantly and came slowly back.

"There's only one thing for it," Dale said at last. "We shall have to do the attacking. If our ammunition holds out we may have a chance, if it doesn't, well, it can't be as bad as what will happen if we stay here. The orders will be: 'Shoot for their lenses, and keep clear of their tentacles.'"

In his own mind he had not much doubt that he was suggesting the impossible, but with a choice between a quick end and lingering asphyxiation he preferred the former both for himself and for his men.

"You, Dugan and Froud, take the sides ——"

"Wait a minute! What's that?" The doctor held his head a little on one side, listening. The others caught the sound. A deep throbbing, growing momentarily louder. They placed it somewhere beyond the canal. Evidently the diaphragms of the machines had picked it up too. The line could be seen faintly stirring.

Low in the western sky a gleam of red light became visible. The throbbing grew quickly to a thunderous roar. Dugan was the first to see the effect on the machines. He looked down in time to see them scampering for the cover of the bushes.

"Now's our chance," he cried, and with the others behind him he ran down that side of the sandhill which was closest to the *Gloria Mundi*.

The noise from the sky became a crashing, deafening din. Whatever was up there seemed to be making straight for them. Dale and Froud flung themselves flat on the sand with their hands clamped over their ears, and a moment later the other two did the same. The whole world seemed to be cracking and trembling with a noise which split the very sky asunder. Louder and yet louder until noise could be no louder. A sheet of flame like a long fiery banner trailed across the sky bathed the desert with a queer, unnatural light. There was a tremor of the ground. Abruptly the noise stopped, leaving behind it a shocking silence. A scorching breath as hot as a flame itself swept over the sand. A rush of cooler air followed, raising a miniature sandstorm. Froud rolled over on his side, blinking at Dale through the dust. Dale was temporarily deaf from the uproar, and though he saw Froud's mouth moving, he could hear nothing, but he guessed the question.

"That," he bawled back, "was another rocket."

NEXT WEEK:

The arrival of a Space Ship from U.S.S.R. causes international complications.

Gift Set—Last Days

ONLY a few days are left in which to make certain of "The Passing Show's" Great Triple Presentation—a magnificent gold-nib fountain pen, propelling pencil and penknife—all to match. A wonderful gift set worth 10s. 6d.

The final Reservation Forms were published in last week's issue of "The Passing Show," together with the Voucher on which to qualify for your set. If you have not yet applied, look up last week's issue and post the forms without delay. All applications must be received by not later than next Wednesday.

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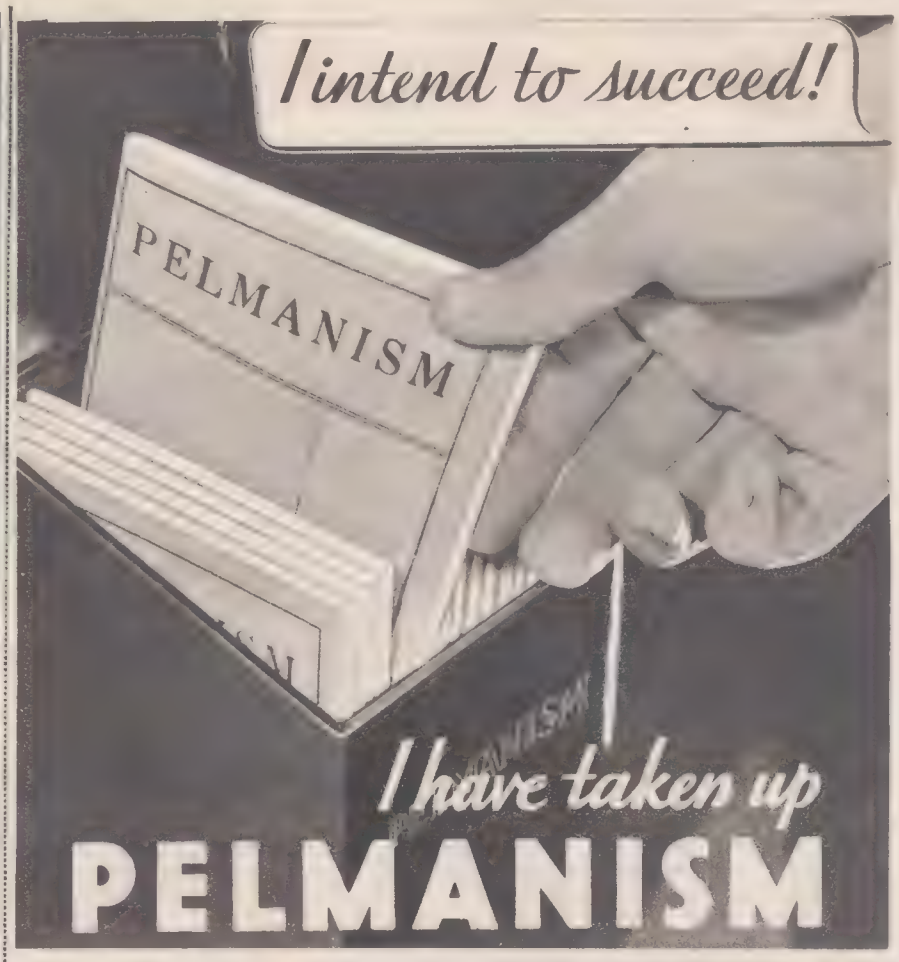

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Never Say NO to the Dainties

WOMAN to WOMAN by Sophia Lauterbach

SUMMER is here! With children clamouring for ice-creams and the migratory ice-cream vendor on the doorstep, it seems a suitable time to decide what food restrictions are really necessary. To a large extent it is a practical question, and it is as well to take stock of the situation with open mind.

As a generation we tend rather to boast of the unrestricted lives of our children. I have a friend, for instance, who is fond of airing her views about the upbringing of her daughter.

"Freedom," she will say. "That is what children need; freedom to express themselves. Now Pamela may do what she likes, and she has learnt to take responsibility for her actions. When I was young, I never dared contradict mother, and as for suggesting occasionally that I considered her foolish, that was unthinkable. Now Pamela may say what she likes."

Now, I once saw Pamela at a party. Until tea-time she seemed to me a delightful child; with tea came disillusionment. She was incredibly greedy. As volubly as her mother, but with less discretion, she unknowingly disclosed the limitations of this freedom she was supposed to enjoy. As she chewed, her comments ran more or less on these lines:

"Thank you, no, I'm not allowed fizzy lemonade, only milk. Oh, yes, I'll *have* fizzy. Oh, I really don't know *what* Mummy would say! Yes, thank you, I'll have more chocolate biscuits. No, no bread. Well, at home, I *have* to begin with a slice of brown bread, but I don't think I'll have any. Yes, that pastry, please. Well, perhaps a sandwich, an egg sandwich. Mummy only allows me two eggs a week. They're very heavy to digest, you know. But I have dried cereal every day. That's very healthy. Thank you, another egg sandwich.

"May I have that éclair? Oh, do you think I'll be sick? Just another chocolate biscuit. Fruit salad and cream? Ooooh, yes." Muttering "I'm sure I'll be sick," she swallowed it rapidly, discussing aloud further intimate digestive details that she thought would interest everybody as vitally as they did her mother.

Pamela, an extreme case, illustrates the error that so many of us are falling into nowadays. We ridicule Mrs. Grundy. We allow the children to behave in a way that would have shocked our more rigid grandmothers. Among themselves, or in our presence, they discuss matters that would have caused a blush of embarrassment to mount the sedate brow of a matron in the naughty nineties.

Your boy of thirteen probably calls his father "Old bean," while my girl of ten addresses me fondly as "Kiddiewig." Neither you nor I turn a hair. In fact, we rather like it as a sign of friendliness, and dislike being set on pedestals. In their manners, their interests and their conversation, we allow them to express themselves with a freedom that is almost licence.

But we take care to redress the balance by being over strict about food, and by concentrating heavily upon needs. We cannot, funnily enough, completely give up all taboos. We happen to have learnt a lot about the healthy life in the last fifteen years, about diet, about vitamins, and health food stores, selling a variety of approved cereals, have sprung up in every suburb.

Many housewives could give lectures on the value of roughage and even think in calories. The result is that we think far too much about children's meals, and in some ways may be more restrictive than the Victorians.

"Too-much-is-not-good-for-you" hammer usually falls on those things children like best. This rationing of the luxuries is based rather more than you think on prejudice and a kill-joy attitude to life. I have found that a little more riotous living harms the children's bodies not at all, and certainly benefits their souls. It results generally in excellent appetites, no indigestion, no food fads. Allowance is always made, of course, for those individual preferences and dislikes to which we are all subject, or, here and there, to some digestive weakness.

This is my system, and I can at least claim for it that it has worked well with my own children. In one of the well-known "free" schools I found the healthiest appetites and sturdiest children I had come across under a method similar to my own.

I decide on the essentials of a well-balanced diet for a growing child and see that they are provided in one way or another in sufficient quantities. Meals proceed with no undue discussion of food and no urgings "because it is good for you." That is a fatal injunction and to my mind more likely to produce dyspepsia than an egg or more every day of the week.

Given this commonsense basis, I allow considerable licence, even unto pickles if the fancy lies there. Sweets are allowed *ad lib*. After all, barley sugar and fruit drops are pressed on children if the doctor happens to order them, and their value is recognised in illness or for travel sickness. But to the healthy child they are generally denied except after meals, when they are given in meagre quantities that merely create a desire for more.

Consumption of ice-cream is limited only by the length of my purse, or the children's pocket money. There have been no ill effects. I have found a freezer to be an invaluable investment. Almost anything can be camouflaged in a home-made ice-cream. Summer fruits and berries have too short a season to cause real difficulties, and with reasonable precautions give very little trouble.

It is through this attitude that the

Don't tell him it is good for him.

A gift of chocolate would soon bring the sweetness back into her life . . . .

children I have in mind possess the virtue of moderation and do seem on the whole to like best those things that are good for them. Of course, they do not always share my prejudices. I have known them invent a mixture of bread and dripping and raspberry jam and find it very tasty. They have never been sick, and I now no longer expect it. In my more naive days I caught my infant daughter in the act of putting a tablet of soap to her mouth.

With a shudder I thought, "I'll let her try it. She'll never want to touch it again." I was wrong. She developed quite a taste for it, and I was driven to take stern measures. On the other hand, the same method applied to mustard deterred her, as I anticipated.

We overlook the fact that food to the child is not merely sustenance. The holding back of things that are good to eat, or playing the benefactor, has a seamy side for the child. It's as effective a way of keeping him in his place as the "children should be seen and not heard" of our own youth.

Only the other day during tea a young mother discussed with her son of five every morsel he consumed while watching him with her possessive, albeit loving eye.

"Jeremy," his hostess asked, "will you have a bun?"

"Thank you," his mother quickly intervened, "he must have some more bread, you know."

"Perhaps a piece of currant cake now, Jeremy?" he was asked later, and his mother again, her voice full of pride, "I'm so sorry. You know, Jerry's really rather difficult about cakes. He'll only eat home-made ones—and mine at that."

Little Jeremy flushed in embarrassment, eyeing the currant cake with surreptitious longing.

To assert his preference would amount to denying his love, and mother's apron strings were very firmly attached to him.

We are, after all, well aware of the power we wield as dispensers of food. We don't hesitate to use chocolates for reward or punishment. We find plenty of fine reasons for withholding sweets and good things when we want to do so, but they are mostly open to question.

Take the legend that sweets are bad for the teeth, for instance. Even dentists hold divided opinions about it, but there is plenty of evidence that sweets are good for the children's souls, for sweet things are frequently construed by children as a concrete sign of love, and they really feel them to be "grateful and comforting." For this reason, if for no other, they should not be unduly restricted.

I know one little person who is very fond of expressing a sense of injury by stamps and yells of rage. Without one word you can quell the storm like magic by offering her a bar of chocolate. To her it is balm, a peace-offering which, figuratively as well as literally, fills her once again with sweetness. As she munches, it replaces the bitterness and fury she was throwing off with such noisy vigour.

SERVICE

for Women Readers in housecraft, mothercraft, dress, beauty and all practical feminine problems is free from the Advice Service, "The Passing Show," 31 Bow Street, London, W.C.2. Enclose a stamped envelope with your query.

Going Away?

WHITSUN opens the holiday season for most of us. Millions will be going away this week-end and throughout the summer. One brief word of advice to readers.

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LMS

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HOLIDAY CONTRACT
TICKETS

Uneasy CHAIR

by A. M.—Burrage

Illustrated by J. Dewar Mills

"I don't want to know the woman. She looks fast to me."

"NOW you're sure you've got everything you want, dear Aunt Martha?"

The very old lady—she was great-aunt Martha really—nodded twiced. If she felt any gratitude for the interest taken in her welfare she did not show it. Her parchment face was quite expressionless. Miss Kittenham chimed in, giving a sidelong glance at Ursula and Peter Rowland.

"Of course you have everything you want, haven't you, dear'r'r?" she crooned. "We all of us loves old Gan-gan. Yes, we does!"

The old lady blinked and said nothing. Miss Kittenham turned triumphantly on Ursula and Peter.

"I love my old armchair," fluted the old lady.

"But you could bring it with you, dear," urged her great-niece.

"She doesn't want to leave here," said Miss Kittenham, with something more than a mere trace of coldness in her voice. "Do you, dear Miss Rowland?"

Then, before the old lady had a chance of reconsidering the matter, Miss Kittenham spoke again.

"Really, it's no use," she said. "Dear Miss Rowland has a will of her own—a magnificent, strong will. Haven't you, dear? There you are, you see! She says so herself. And if she is happy here among her little circle of warm-hearted friends—who would do just anything for her—it would be a shame to try to induce her to go."

Ursula and Peter were silent. What could they say? The game which was being played by Miss Kittenham—the proprietress of the Komfy Korner Boarding Establishment—was obvious to them both. The old lady could not go on living forever, and Miss Kittenham had an eye on that gilt-edged stock which brought in such a comfortable little income.

"We'll come again next week," said Ursula, in the resigned tone of a general accepting a temporary reverse.

The old lady merely nodded. Within two minutes Ursula and Peter were outside, and walking away from the front door.

"It's really a dreadful shame!" Ursula said in a low voice.

"I was thinking much the same," her young husband observed dryly. "Only I used a stronger adjective."

"Funny her affection for that armchair. She's been in that same seat for years. Only leaves it at meal-times and when she goes to bed. I suppose she simply doesn't want to make any changes at her time of life. I can understand it. What I don't like is that Miss Kittenham working heavens hard to keep her there."

The young couple boarded a train on the Metropolitan Railway and were still talking about Aunt Martha and Miss Kittenham when they reached home about twenty minutes later.

Peter let them in with the latch-key and stood for a moment sniffing in the little hall-way of the flat.

"Hullo!" he remarked. "Somebody's been smoking some pretty strong tobacco. Mary must have let somebody in—"

His voice was drowned by a roar from the door of the drawing-room, which opened on the instant. A great voice boomed at them.

"Hullo, me dears! Hullo! Hullo! Hullo!"

"*Larry!*" cried Peter.

"*Larry!*" squealed Ursula.

Mr. Larry O'Brien, friend of Peter since the beginning of their schooldays, bounded out on them like a great friendly dog. He kissed Ursula. He gave Peter a friendly punch on the chest. He laughed with the sound of a train leaving a tunnel.

"I thought you were in Nigeria," said Peter, gasping slightly.

"So I have been, these three last years. But is there not a grand service of boats between here and Africa? And may a man never take a holiday? I'm home for six months—here and in the old country. Just long enough for me to burn me money, I'm thinkin'."

There was a pause.

"Well, jolly glad to see you again, you old blackguard," said Peter. "You'll stay with us, of course? There's a spare room."

"For a night or two—if Ursula can stand the racket of me. But ye'll dine with me to-night. Go and get out your glad rags and we'll see if there's any food fit to eat in London. Well, how's the world been usin' you, my dears?"

They could not tell him everything at once. There was so much to be told. Not until a few hours later, when they were sitting round a restaurant table did Mr. Larry O'Brien hear about great aunt Martha and Miss Kittenham.

Larry listened, frowned and thrust out his underlip.

"And ye think she's got the upper hand of your old aunt?" he asked. "Kapin' her there by the force of her pairsonality?"

"I'm pretty sure of it," said Ursula.

Larry rubbed his chin.

"It's a mean thing to do," he said. "I can forgive a murder but not a meanness. And lucky it is for the pair o' ye that I've got a week or two to spare. For I'll have her out of that place for ye before I go and have the fling I've promised myself. Now just give me the address and rest easy."

◆ ◆ ◆

"Miss" Larry O'Brien—*Miss* O'Brien, if you please—was as striking an elderly lady as you could wish to see. Her hair—or wig—was of a flaming orange. Her complexion obviously owed a great deal to the rouge-pot. Not that there was anything out of the ordinary in that. So many elderly ladies use make-up nowadays. But in some vague and unseizable way there was something altogether queer about her.

She was large for a woman—but there are plenty of large women. Her voice was deep for a woman's—but there are plenty of contraltos. No, although one couldn't say precisely what it was, there was something else about her which seemed remarkably odd. A policeman followed her thoughtfully with his gaze as she strode from the suburban station in the direction of the Komfy Korner Boarding Establishment.

Miss Kittenham received her with a toothy smile. Miss Kittenham didn't care how odd she looked so long as her money was all right. And Miss Kittenham had a vacant room. In fact, Miss Kittenham had three, for times were not quite what they were.

"And how much would ye be wantin' for the best of them. Full board an' all, an' all."

Miss Kittenham named a sum half a guinea in excess of what she expected and a guinea in excess of what she would have been willing to take. Rather to her astonishment the prospective boarder did not attempt to bargain. He—or rather she—produced a wad of notes. He handed over some of them.

"These'll see me through for a month, then," said "Miss" O'Brien.

Larry O'Brien—for of course you knew who it was—waited for the receipt which he stuffed away in an unfeminine pocket.

"And now," said Miss Kittenham, beaming, "you would like to meet your fellow guests. I expect most of them will be in the drawing-room. I am sure you will find them all very nice indeed."

Miss Kittenham's collection of oddities was not quite unique, but the sight of them was a little disturbing to a man who was used to the comparative tameness of the aborigines of Nigeria. There was old Mr. Skull who had religious mania and old Miss Minkle who had had neuralgia for forty-seven years. There were the twin sisters Bunderby, mere children of fifty-eight, whom nature had constructed so exactly alike that they could wear each other's teeth without inconvenience.

Then there was Miss Muffling who did cross word puzzles all day long and could

(*continued on page* 36)

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CONTINUING *Uneasy Chair*

never get a standard dictionary to suit her; Miss Maule who was always playing the piano when nobody had the presence of mind to lock it up; and last but not least——

"And this," said Miss Kittenham, with an air of displaying the gem of her collection—"this is Miss Rowland."

The venerable great-aunt took no notice of Larry's "How d'you do."

"She's a little deaf," whispered Miss Kittenham.

"Not at all," fluted the old lady. "I heard perfectly. But I don't want to know the woman. She looks fast to me."

Larry uttered a cough which sounded hard and masculine. He was acutely conscious of looking like the Widow Twankey in a small provincial pantomime, but it was the best he could do by way of female impersonation.

Later in the evening, before the meal which Miss Kittenham had the nerve to call dinner was really at an end, the new boarder rose hastily and vanished into the drawing-room. A few minutes later Miss Muffling and Miss Minkle followed him. They halted in the doorway and there were whispers.

"*You* tell her," whispered Miss Muffling.

"*You* tell her!" repeated Miss Minkle.

There was an awkward pause, broken at last by Miss Muffling.

"Excuse me," she said.

"Heh?" said the new boarder somewhat abruptly.

"You're sitting in MissRowland's chair."

"It's not Miss Rowland's chair. It belongs to the house. Anybody can sit in it."

The two ladies looked at each other in a marked manner.

"But Miss Rowland always *has* sat there," Miss Muffling protested feebly.

"In that case a change will do her a world of good."

The two ladies considered, and of one accord they charged back into the dining-room. They had the pathetic and ingenuous manner of very young children telling tales. Miss Minkle actually began her address to the proprietress with the word, "Please."

"Please, Miss Kittenham, the new boarder's taken Miss Rowland's chair and won't give it up."

"Hey?" said Miss Rowland with a kind of whistle in her voice.

Miss Kittenham frowned. Great tact was needed to meet the situation.

"I'll explain to her to-morrow," she said.

"What's the use of to-morrow?" piped Miss Rowland. "I want to sit there *now!*"

Miss Kittenham wagged a finger playfully.

"Now, Gan-gan!" she said. "Now, now! Now you didn't sleep well last night. You know you didn't. You go off to bed and have a nice lovely beautiful rosy sleep. I'll speak to her and to-morrow you shall have your chair back again."

But Miss Kittenham spoke hopefully rather than with conviction. There had been occasions previous to this when Civil War had reared its ugly head within her demesne. Privately she thought all her boarders were lunatics—otherwise quite logically, they would not be her boarders.

Miss Rowland, with perhaps some premonition that things were not going to be as they were, went slowly and morosely to bed. Miss Kittenham, arming herself with the tact necessary for approaching someone of means, rustled into the drawing-room and addressed the newcomer in a low and confidential voice.

"Excuse me, Miss O'Brien, but that chair you're sitting in——"

Larry O'Brien turned upon her a hard face and one questioning and daunting eye.

"Yes?" he said.

"Miss Rowland generally sits there."

"Well, haven't I as much right to it as anybody else."

"Oh, yes, but——"

"It belongs to the establishment, doesn't it? It's not her own private chair?"

"No, but——"

"Anybody who sits in it first has the right to go on sitting in it as long as he or she chooses?"

"Yes, but——"

The newcomer expressed cold displeasure.

"Excuse me, but everything you say seems to end with 'but.' 'But' is a conjunction and should never be used at the end of a sentence. Am I not paying as much as Miss Rowland?"

"Yes, but—I mean, yes you are."

"Very well then. I am only a lonely old woman," Larry continued sadly, "but I know how to stick up for my rights. If I get into that chair first it's mine until I choose to leave it."

Miss Kittenham said no more. She knew how easy it was to start a boarding-house feud. They are like smouldering fires which once fanned to a blaze, take a great deal of extinguishing.

A little later in the evening she discovered for herself that the feud had started. The others, finding Larry in the chair sacred to Miss Rowland, and Miss Rowland gone before her usual time, jumped to a right conclusion. They whispered to Miss Kittenham and Miss Kittenham confessed what had happened.

And instantly there were rival camps. There were those who said it was a shame. There were others who said that old Miss Rowland had no more right to that chair than anybody else, and that it was about time that somebody came along to show her that it wasn't hers by right. The debate, conducted in far corners of the room, went on late into the night.

Miss Rowland breakfasted in bed. She came downstairs at half past ten on the following morning, crept into the drawing-room and halted in the doorway. There was her chair, and on it was the wretched newcomer, and the creature looked as if it had not stirred during the past fourteen hours.

The old lady uttered a faint croak of dismay and went upstairs again.

During the succeeding days only meals lured Larry from that chair. Afterwards he was always first out of the room. It took poor Miss Rowland a certain time to rise from the table, and at the first tentative sign Larry was through the door, across the hall and in the coveted place. Miss Rowland could only grunt and look deeply injured. Some were sorry for her; others were not.

Foremost among all poor Miss Rowland's sympathisers was Miss O'Flaherty. Miss O'Flaherty owned to sixty-four, and it was probably her correct age because—as she was never tired of saying—there was no nonsense about her. She called a Spade an Achpade, did Miss O'Flaherty.

Miss O'Flaherty was by nature the champion of the oppressed, the sworn enemy of oppressors. Her blood boiled every time she looked at "Miss O'Brien"—her fellow countrywoman too, if the "craytur's" name told the truth. She confided in Miss Maule, who went on playing the piano while she listened—partly because she could do both at once and partly because the loud pedal kept the conversation private.

"I'm going to get the wumman out of the house," she whispered.

"Which wum——which woman?"

"As if ye didn't know! The one that's masqueradin' here under an honourable name and tormentin' a poor old craytur by always sittin' in her chair."

"*Dingle-dingle-dingle-dingle-dong,*" went the piano.

"How?" asked Miss Maule.

"I will not be dinin' here to-night. I am going to the pictures."

"*Tinkle-tum-tum*—yes?"

"But I shall not be leavin' until after you're all in to dinner."

"*Tum-tinkle-tum*—well?"

"D'ye see where I'm looking?"

Miss Maule turned her head while continuing to play.

"Were you looking at that stuffed hedgehog?" Miss Maule asked.

"'Tis no hedgehog, wumman. It's a porcupine. Now I've often wondered what use a porcupine could be, but the ways of Providence are inscrutable, and there's a use for everything. I can open the case. Indade, I've done so already for curiosity's sake."

"I don't understand," said Miss Maule, pitching her voice to match the low notes.

"Wait!" said Miss O'Flaherty mysteriously. "And tell me all about it when I return late to-night or to-morrow morning."

The fact of Miss O'Flaherty being absent from dinner that night did not seem to increase the rations of the guests around the dinner table. The meal, from Larry's point of view, was worse than usual.

He rejected the tepid soup, he only toyed with the tough mutton, and he hated apple tart. And when the meal had reached that stage, all that he could do was to fill up with cheese.

If he were a mouse feeding on the cheese, and if Miss Rowland were a cat, he could not have been watched with a greater or more furtive care. Two ounces of cheese and half a slice of bread were on his small plate when Miss Rowland, with a look which implored for silence, began to rise as silently and quickly as she knew how. Others watched the comedy without any amusement.

With the subtle cunning of the feline Miss Rowland waited until the mouth of the odious "Miss O'Brien" was full. Then suddenly she straightened herself, turned quickly, and began to shuffle to the door.

Larry O'Brien looked up suddenly, started and then grinned. He had to own himself beaten. Well, let the poor old lady have her pet chair for just once. It couldn't make much difference. To-morrow he would begin again to persevere. Sooner or later the old lady would give up the struggle and go and live in peace with her grandnephew out of the clutches of that designing woman.

Comforting himself with this thought, he put into his mouth a small cube of bread upon which a morsel of cheese was balanced—and nearly swallowed both of them whole.

The cry from the drawing-room brought the whole company to its feet. Miss Kittenham made a rush for the door, followed by others. Larry O'Brien hesitated and hung back. If anything were wrong with the poor old lady, it were perhaps better for other ladies—real ladies—to investigate first. The drawing-room door closed and cut off the sounds of commotion.

Larry sat on, his heart heavy. Devoutly he hoped that nothing serious had befallen the poor old lady. Whatever might have happened to her, he told himself, it could not have been his fault.

Five minutes later the drawing-room door opened once more, and Miss Kittenham passed through it and came back to the dining-room, wringing her hand.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

Miss Kittenham took no notice but went to the telephone. She called for a number and, after a while, told somebody at the other end of the wire to send round a car in an hour's time. Then she rang off.

"What's the matter?" Larry asked again.

Miss Kittenham was nearly sobbing.

"It's no use!" she whimpered. "It's no use! Miss Rowland is leaving us!"

"What?"

"She's leaving. She won't stay another hour. She says she won't stay in a house where there are jokes. Some wretch—some low wretch—took the stuffed porcupine out of its case and put it under the loose cover of her favourite chair. Could you—have you any tweezers you could lend her?"

Larry had the presence of mind to drop the ring of his table napkin on to the floor; and it took him some while to find it, while he bit tightly into his lip. While he groped he heard Miss Kittenham's voice in the air above.

"So she's going straight off now to live with her grand-nephew. . . ."

Two evenings later, at the home of Ursula and Peter, Larry was introduced, in male attire, to great-aunt Martha. She eyed him appraisingly.

"I believe I've seen you before somewhere," she said. "Or somebody very like you. Now, where was it? I daresay I shall remember later."

"Larry's got a surprise for you," said Peter. "You know that old chair at the boarding-house, the one you were always so fond of? Well, I got him to go and buy it for you to-day, so that while you're with us, you can still feel at home."

A grim expression crossed the old lady's face. It suggested that a memory had been stirred which had better be left dormant. She winced reminiscently.

"That chair!" she exclaimed. "My dear boy, nothing will ever induce me to sit in *that* again."

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COS 2-508

S. L. BENSUSAN reminds those who take to the byways this week-end that there is a "rule of the road" for every footpath . . .

Play the Game *when you* Go Tramping

NOW that the "hiking" season has come round again, the question of trespass looms large. There are two sides to it. The first and most important is the right of a public, driven from the roads by reckless motorists, or even by its own heedlessness, to enjoy the lovely countryside that fringes the formal ways of rural England.

The second side is one that demands consideration from all who wish to play the game of life honourably; it is the right of the landowner to protect his property from assault. I think we will agree that his proper amenities are violated when walkers leave gates open, trample down wild flowers, damage fences, and, worst of all, light fires and drop cigarette ends on woodland or heath. You may have covered the loss of money values by insurance, but the loss of beauty is abiding.

We have all seen spaces of blackened gorse and broom, scorched trunks of fine upstanding trees; we know that very often they are the victims of a cigarette end or a camp fire. There is another and still more common nuisance: the picnic that covers a beauty spot with paper, tins, fruit rind, and other rubbish.

When we come to consider the question fairly, it is apparent that all infringements of reasonable private rights are the work of a careless or thoughtless minority, and might be kept in check. For the past thirty years I have owned land that has offered summer attraction to hikers; a few have sought, others have taken, permission to use it. I have asked one and all to light no fires and leave no rubbish, and there has been friendliness on both sides.

As one who eats in the open air in fine weather and nearly always on other people's land, I follow the rule of packing up all litter; but I take a trowel with me and, if the soil is light enough make a hole and bury debris.

Those warnings

As far as the law of trespass is concerned there is much lack of understanding. Many landowners disfigure the country with lying notices to the effect that trespassers will be prosecuted. They will not. If you and I walk over another man's land, breaking no barrier or hedge and doing no damage, the worst that can happen to us is a request by the owner or those who represent him to return to the public way.

If we refuse, he has the right to use as much force as may be necessary to turn us out, but if, on learning that our presence is regarded as an intrusion, we leave at once there is no action he can take. *Trespassers are not prosecuted for trespass, only for damage.*

When I was much younger than I am now, I put up a notice in Scotland about trespass in an endeavour to keep hikers from walking over a grouse moor and disturbing my birds; I was laughed at and told that in Scotland people knew nothing about trespass. I apologised and withdrew the notice.

Another fact to be borne in mind is the existence of innumerable rights of way that have been closed arbitrarily throughout England and Wales. Happily, there is a Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society, the terror of men eager to curtail the public right; it helps to free the land for the enjoyment of one and all.

I should like to see every company of men and women or boys and girls that practises hiking accept certain rules of conduct and appoint certain of the party to guard their observance. One might be responsible for the closing of gates; if they are left open, stock may stray and the farmer may suffer damage. Another should see to it that, where necessary, walking in single file shall be the rule; a third might be responsible to watch that no lighted cigarette ends are thrown down and that no fires are lit in any place where it is possible for the grass or the hedge to be scorched and to be sure that, before the party leaves, the fire is dead. It would be better still if fires were ruled out altogether.

Another excellent rule would be that no flowers should be picked and thrown away, and that none should be taken up by the roots. Finally, the disposal of all litter by burying it would complete the list of rules that a hiking company might impose upon itself.

They are simple enough, but if they could be adopted by all parties, large and small, and carried out scrupulously, the outcries of indignant landowners would be stilled and the disastrous heath or forest fires unknown.

I would like to point out, further, that these little rules of conduct would do nothing to check the enjoyment of a holiday; indeed, sensitive people must needs be pleased to think that nobody could reasonably regard their ramble on other folk's land as an intrusion.

Cause of it all

At present we find, on the one side, many landowners clinging to obsolete rights and endeavouring to create others, while folk who have no community sense are offending through ignorance or carelessness rather than ill will. Civility and right endeavour on both sides will heal most differences; now and again these are conspicuously lacking. Much beautiful country would be made more easy of access if the owners had no fear that it would be ill used, while much damage that is done to-day would be avoided if the hiker understood a little more about country needs and life.

I have not dealt with the difficulties of the countryman himself; he is often in worse plight than the hiker. His area is limited; he can't go from one county to another at will; he must stay put. He knows all the field paths; they have been familiar to him since childhood, but they are hard to maintain.

He has seen the plough pass over them and the arable crop or the orchard obliterate the track, and he has felt that he must not complain, since if he does he may be up against his own employer; and there is little room on the land even to-day for sturdy men who lack proper respect for authority and wealth.

He hasn't heard of the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society, and would hesitate to invoke its aid if he did; he cannot afford to get in the way of trouble.

This was different

I remember urging a man who had complained that a very pleasant path had been unlawfully closed, to appeal to the Parish Council. He was asking me how to do so, when his wife intervened.

"John don't want to do that," she said uneasily. "We can't." Thereupon I advised the man not to proceed, because I could see that there would be trouble for him if he did; his wife was so obviously distressed.

The reason was explained by a neighbour who knew that countryside better than I did. "Mrs. Blank is a very good cook," he explained. "They send for her to 'the house' when they have visitors. If he were to make trouble about the footpath that has been closed, she might lose that job; and it means quite a lot to her, with only her husband's thirty shillings and a young family to look after."

Hikers who, giving no ground to criticism, open up the byways and enjoy England in due season are not only helping themselves. The obscure countryman who cannot voice his own rights is also better off.

Here's Something Sensational for the Ladies

Ladies who have always sighed for frocks of exclusive design can have the thrill of their lives. They can obtain FREE of all costs the Pattern of an afternoon frock created by a fashion genius of Mayfair. Especially designed to make it easy to get faultless cut—and the pattern is FREE.

SEE PAGE 33

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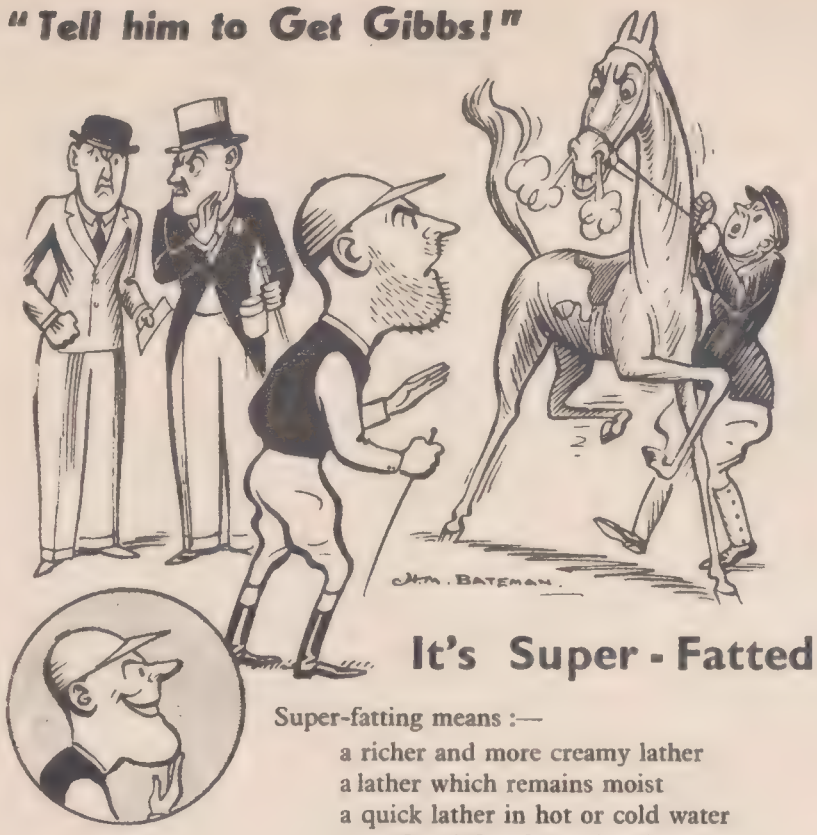

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FATEFUL *Voyage*

FOR some time stranded at a certain South-American port, through no fault of my own, my master's ticket still found nobody interested. So beggars had no right to be choosers, when a chance meeting with a hard-bitten skipper over drinks at a water-front cafe ended in my being signed on as first mate.

Being so pleased with the prospect, quite unexpected, of finding myself at sea again, I paid little attention to the fact that my impressions of the skipper's personality had not been too good. Fine seamanship is often hidden away under an uncouth and even repulsive personality, I knew. I felt that I might have been mistaken.

I was not to be mistaken, however, in the ship and those aboard her, by the time I had seen her loaded, and we were at sea. She was a very old, British-built tramp, now foreign-owned. The last fact was notable in negligence. Nothing more than was absolutely necessary could possibly have been spent on her for ages, and her condition was very dirty.

My predecessor, I soon discovered, had been left behind in hospital, after a rough house ashore with two members of the crew. I was not too amazed to learn that, judging by the specimens I, in turn, had to handle. They were scum. However, I knew how to manage their kidney, and quickly had them well under control. Even to the extent of having the ship cleaned to my liking—a seamanlike necessity which, while they obeyed orders, they clearly looked on as a strange madness on my part.

I was less able to appreciate the fact that the skipper held the same view, all the same. Yet, time I knew him better, I realised the reason for this. He was one of those men who, from holding quite good commands, sink low down in the scale. In his case, possibly through drink, for he soaked heavily. At such times he would brag about when he had been in the passenger service, rail against an ill-fortune as great as Job's, and probably ended by becoming quarrelsome.

A spell of bad weather, into which we ran, had an amazingly sobering effect on him, I found. It proved to me as well that he knew his job. He never left the bridge; and—take it from me—we went through something. Still, I had a strange feeling that he was thinking more of his own skin than of the ship, which—more than once—might well have gone down.

The dirty weather fell away abruptly one night, and the skipper went back just as abruptly to his drink. He was several more than three sheets in the wind, I noticed, when, handing over to my relief, I joined him over some food. He'd been some time below then, and the whisky-bottle was looking foolish, as to contents. His eyes, too, had a glassy stare, which sometimes became a squint as he talked about the storm we'd just been through. Suddenly he lurched towards me, beckoning me confidentially.

"Didn't want to go down in that!" I heard him saying. "No. Boats wouldn't have lived through it. No drowning for me, mister. When we put this old barge to sleep——"

Then he stopped, just as suddenly, suspicion in his staring eyes, which became cunning, and he laughed.

"Never bother about that, mister, anyway!" he chuckled. "You go on making her look pretty, mister, just as if she was going to get married . . ."

He dropped off in a kind of coma, at that, and I went on with my food. But I did bother, all the same. I'd a powerful feeling he hadn't said that for nothing, about putting this old barge to sleep. Truths come from drunken men, like milk pressed from a cow. I tried to puzzle it out.

However, came next day, I thought that perhaps it was only drunken drivel, and not worth bothering about, so I gave it up. I'd enough to do about ship, without working out cross-word puzzles. The second officer had damaged a knee in the storm, and was laid by. The skipper was more or less drink-doped.

I'd done more than my whack of duty by late afternoon, when a sudden excitement broke loose. The look-out spotted something a long distance to port, the sea being now mirror-smooth and with a red-hot sun burning in the west. Altering course, I was soon able to see a derelict ship's boat, doubtless from some vessel gone down in the storm.

She looked empty at first, but they brought up out of her a young woman, very far gone from exhaustion, and with her—all wrapped up in a bundle—a few months' old baby. Strangely, while the young woman was stretched out, as if dead, the baby didn't seem bad at all, giving voice in a lively way after a few minutes of being handled by me.

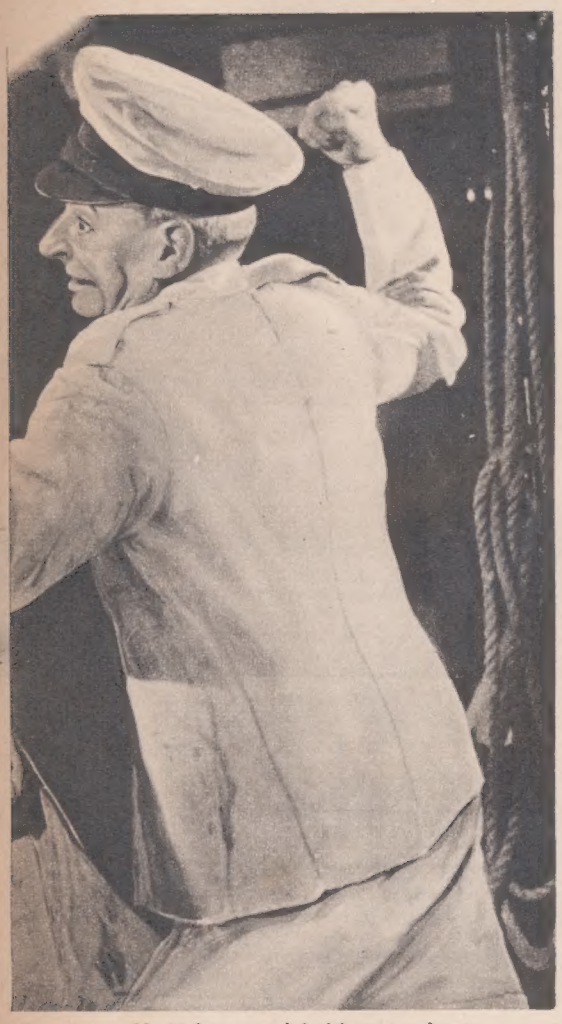
The wail of it, to my surprise, was cut into by the skipper's voice just behind me, asking:

"What in blazes have you got there, mister?"

He'd just been jerked to his senses below, it seemed, by the ship being still while we salved the derelict, and come up to see what it meant. The scared way he looked from that baby to the stretched-out young woman, and back again to the baby almost made me laugh while I explained. However, he was a long way from laughing back.

He seemed quite frightened, and angry as well, saying there was nothing funny about having women and children cluttering up a ship where they weren't wanted. But, anyhow, this sobered him right then and there. He sent the crowding crew flying this way and that, and had woman and child taken below, where he tended to the woman.

He came later to me on the bridge. It seemed the woman looked in a bad way, needing rightly to be rushed to land and a



He had a stranglehold on my throat . . .

hospital, if she was to be saved. Better for the baby, too, naturally, nobody on board being qualified in nursing infants. We didn't carry any radio, so we couldn't call any possibly near ship for help. I pointed out to the skipper, anyway, how we could make a most convenient port next morning without going much out of our course.

He agreed, but puzzled me over the way he still seemed to hesitate, as if—simple as it might be—that wasn't what he fancied. Then, all of a sudden, a voice reached us from one of the crew, coming aft at a run. He yelled out something that caused the skipper and me to forget all about woman and baby, seeing that the man spoke of what a sailor at sea dreads most of all perhaps. Fire.

The man said that smoke was coming out of the for'ard hold, and it looked as if things were bad. I thought the skipper had gone stark, raving mad, the way he heard and took that bit of news.

"What?" he almost screamed, white in the face as a dead man. "You're lying, that's what you are!" he raved. "Why, such a thing couldn't be, man!"

Why he should have thought that I couldn't imagine, as I followed him for'ard at a run. Our cargo, I knew, was highly inflammable stuff. You never can tell, with cargoes, especially in the tropics, where ignition may happen from unexpected causes. It had happened here, anyhow, as the skipper could see for himself, time we reached the for'ard hatch, which was belching black clouds.

He looked so stupefied that I began shouting orders, when he turned very truculent, asking who ran the ship, him or me. Then he muttered something about the woman and baby, telling me to set about changing course to make that near port at full speed, while he saw to the fire.

I'd carried out my orders, the engines going all out, and been some time on the bridge, when the second mate showed up, bad knee or not, and took over from me. That left me free to join in the fire-fighting, and I hurried below. The cargo in that hold was bales of some fibrous sort of substance, smelling horribly after fire and water had been getting at it.

In a ship of this class, foreign-owned and badly run, there wasn't much idea of fire discipline, while means of fighting any

TRUE LIFE STORIES

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blaze were out of date and none too good at that. However, when I'd joined the men, they'd made fine headway, having located the origin of the trouble and practically got it beaten.

Looking for the skipper, whom someone said had gone towards the far end of the hold a moment since, I went that way floundering over the bales, helping myself through the smoke and dark with an electric torch I always carried. All of a sudden, as I flashed its rays over the bales of stuff, they picked out something which made me stop and look closer, puzzled as to what it might mean.

Wedged away in a little hollow low down among the bales, were things which certainly were not cargo, and anyone but a fool would have recognised as being there for a purpose, the very opposite to fire-fighting. Well, I was so taken aback that I stood, keeping my light on this amazing find, when a snorting sound near by made me swing round, torch and all.

It showed me the skipper, his face ghastly in my light, and his eyes glaring at me terribly. I knew, in a flash, it was him or me for it . . .

What went on there in the dark, I don't remember much. But, at one moment, I thought I was all in, for he was a hefty man, and he had a stranglehold on my throat that was getting me beat.

Then, quite suddenly, his hold loosened and he went all limp. I'd lost my torch, of course, but I could feel he was beyond giving any more trouble. I did some quick thinking. It came to me that it wouldn't be wise—not then, anyhow—to let the crew know what had really happened, about that queer find among the bales, and the skipper's obvious interest in it.

So I dragged him well away from the spot, back to where the men were hunched about that blaze, which was as good as out by then. I called two of them to help, saying I'd found the skipper unconscious, putting it down to him probably being overcome by the fumes, which were bad enough for that, anyhow.

It was a long while before I got him round, whatever had knocked him out so suddenly. And when, alone with him in his cabin, I told him what explanation I'd given, his gratitude was quite pitiful. The crew knew nothing, he said, and hoped I wasn't telling them. He was, he admitted, entirely in my hands.

His story explained away, of course, that night when he'd talked drunkenly about the old barge being put to sleep, then pulling himself together and telling me not to bother about it. The ship was to have been fired by him, and let burn so that she had to be abandoned. She was heavily insured, and the owners had more or less forced him into playing this game for them, promising him a new and better ship.

"Not that I ever really liked it, mister," he urged on me fiercely. "But—I'd no option. It was that, or the sack. So I'd forced myself to go through with it in three days' time, when we were near enough to land. Only—that young woman and baby came along, all unexpected. It made me think of the time when I'd a young wife and baby just so little. Mister, I want you to believe that I'd made up my mind not to do that thing.

"Then—just as if I'd changed my mind too late—that proper fire showed itself!" he went on. "Mister, knowing what was down in that hold, I was in hell's fear till it was well towards out, as you can guess."

I guessed that easily, just as I guessed he'd gone where his fire-raising stuff was hidden to make sure all was safe there, never dreaming I was likely to be looking for him. It was I who put that stuff overboard in the night, and told the skipper no more was to be said about it.

That fateful voyage over, we parted. I've heard of him once since, however. He'd a shore job, I was told. He was married to the heroine of this story, and doing well.

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"Monthly Return" Tickets (1d. a mile 3rd, 1½d. a mile 1st class) issued from nearly all stations.

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You're Telling Us!

Obviously afraid of his wife.

LET ME INTRODUCE a lad who is looking for trouble. "I'd like to know," asks M. Henderson, of Yorks, "why blondes get all the limelight. In my not-so-humble opinion they are, compared with brunettes, as moonlight unto sunlight, as water unto wine." Such men are definitely dangerous, but whereas you expect such blundering cock-sureness from a Yorkshireman, it's odd to hear him babbling about moonlight and sunlight and the rest of the raggle-taggle from the poet's workbasket.

There are few animals braver than a Yorkshireman. He looks at you with that "don't-care-a-damn" challenge in his eyes and you begin to wilt, and, if there's a girl in the offing—well, he'll risk anything, even poetry. What a thrill a girl must get out of turning a rearin' tearin' he-man like M. Henderson into a sentimental trout who is ready to stop the first man he sees to tell him the good news.

JUST LISTEN to friend Henderson: "My girl's a brunette, with gorgeous big, brown eyes and hair like black satin, and I wouldn't change one of her dusky curls for all the platinum tresses of all the peachiest blondes in Hollywood.

"You should see her, Mr. Editor. By gum, she's a gradely lass, and when she twinkles those brown eyes, you want to wrap up the earth and give it to her. If gentlemen prefer blondes, then let 'em. I'm no gentleman, and who cares? Not me and my girl."

And that is why Carl Sandburg said that poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on water, wanting to fly the air. Did you ever hear such a fuss over a slip of a girl? And, anyway, what's the use of writing an ode to-day to a brunette who may be a blonde to-morrow.

IF THERE'S A SUGGESTION of cynicism in all this, please blame J. E. Pogson, another Yorkshire Tyke, who dares a thousand "brick-bats from indignant lovers" to say "love is nothing more than a highly infectious form of self delusion."

"A young man meets a pretty girl," he says. "She 'takes his eye' and, after cultivating her acquaintance, he decides he is in love with her. How pathetically wrong he is. What really happens is this; he is in love with the thought of love. He thinks he is in love with Her. That sounds paradoxical—I'll say it does, Editor—but a little thought and you will see what I mean.

"Love is 'general'; woman the 'particular.' Does it matter then which girl takes the part of the 'particular'? A man would still be in love if, by some mental trick, he happened to forget all about the first girl and met another who had the same appeal. Can this then be real love?"

And so, ladies and gentlemen, we will leave these two gallant Yorkshiremen, one "in love" and the other with a secret sorrow—he is either sorry he took the plunge or sorry he didn't—to return gently with the passing of spring to their senses, reminding them that we expect neither poets nor philosophers from their county; we receive cricketers and puddings, and that's too much for most of us.

We hold no brief for either of them; but at least their letters show the truth of the adage that when anybody is completely happy or completely miserable, he must tell someone about it.

FOR INSTANCE, Mr. C., of Gloucester,—this poor man is obviously afraid of his wife—just hates the man next door, who is pointed out to him by his wife as the model of a perfect husband.

"He never has to be told the lawn wants rolling," says poor, hen-pecked Mr. C. "He doesn't romp with the dog in the garden—so common, my dear; he doesn't sit in the house without his collar on; he doesn't neglect his wife . . . he doesn't smoke or bet. . . ."

Poor Mr. C. What has he to say about love? It will do his timid soul good to hear from Mlle. Mitzi Boirot, who has written to tell us what grand men the Scots are. (As though we didn't know, *ma cherie*.) As she describes herself as half French and young, we are not surprised to hear that after a holiday in the Highlands she has returned to London convinced that Scots are neither cold in manner nor in nature. So they've been having a hot time in Blairgowrie while "the snow lay thick and fast." We have always suspected that a sentimental streak lay beneath those rugged granite faces that thrust themselves over the edge of the bunker to ask, "Will ye be havin' dinner brought out to ye?"

"Frenchmen are not the only gallant men I know," says Mlle., "but why do Englishmen neglect their hands and wear such funny socks?" Perhaps it's love, little Mitzi, or merely the spring that makes men take to red socks with green clocks; perhaps it's the desire to fight tooth and claw for their blondes or brunettes that makes 'em grow their nails long.

Maybe a blonde to-morrow.

SERVICE on motoring, travel, holidays, dress, finance, home, education, and every other practical subject is given free by "The Passing Show" Advice Service, 31 Bow Street, London, W.C.2. Enclose stamped envelope with query.

DO BLACK MEN BLUSH? Here's a fishy problem set by W. Haddock, a County Durham yeoman, to whom colour has become a positive nightmare.

He thinks that we possess the same characteristics as the chameleon the only difference being that we turn colour according to our emotions while it turns colour according to its surroundings.

"We often read of people going purple with rage," he says. Also, they go red with shame and white with passion. There are those who go into a blue funk or turn green with envy. In gangster films, perfectly healthy white men, without any trace of jaundice, become livid with temper when accused of being yellow. When I failed to understand my friend's statement that he was in the pink of condition he gave me a black look. . . . But does a black man blush?"

AFTER PROLONGED PRAYER and meditation we remember that our favourite writer of thrillers believes strong men blush beneath their tan, which suggests a possible answer to the problem. But the same author will insist that the heroine's eyes sweep the floor whenever she feels bashful; that she lifts her eyes from a book whenever the hero appears; that there is death in the wicked woman's smile; and that whenever the villain is bent on mischief he must pick his steps as well as his locks and probably his teeth.

So I doubt whether we can accept such an authority. Uncle Joe, with his penetrating mind, has suggested clearing up the whole business by telling his new Mae West story to the first negro he meets. He's dashed away full of enthusiasm. . . It's rather worrying, because we'd hate to lose Uncle Joe.

Half a guinea is paid for each letter or quotation printed. Address: "Readers' Letters," "Passing Show," 31 Bow Street, London, W.C.2. Please state whether Mr., Mrs. or Miss.

PASSING SHOTS

A London collector has paid £600 for three Napoleon letters. Many men still living have paid as much for some of their own letters!

◆ ◆ ◆

"After I had very carefully purchased a suit with two pairs of trousers," writes a clerk, "what do you think I did?" Tore a hole in the jacket.

◆ ◆ ◆

"To win a motor-cycle race," states a sports writer, "it is essential to have strong arms." But not so essential as it is to have a motor-cycle.

Solution Next Week

CLUES ACROSS

1. Strange to find this in placidity.
4. Apparently not a vegetarian.
10. Abyssinian ruler.
12. Maybe celestial body.
13. Item in part.
15. So restore pup (anagram).
19. Half of 14.
20. Seat in the Orient.
21. Extract this article from 1 down.
22. Deposits.
24. Probably wheezy.
28. A rustling sound.
29. This is final in Greek.
30. Turn the heart of 45.
31. Media to take a line.
33. Dirty marks.
35. This well may be the well of a Spartan.
38. Sale for drinks.
40. Tree of Bashan.
41. Ship's boss may be reduced to such motion.
42. Stone or to mend as you may prefer.
43. Only a wee hillock.
44. 41 down becomes employer.
45. This you may do with 22.
46. Wholesale murder.
48. Take opposite of 20 for a dish.
49. Staff of authority.
50. Names or conditions.

CLUES DOWN

1. These may deceive.
2. Ties Mabel in (anagram).
3. This is fathomed.
4. Not completely bust.
5. The obvious he states to hide the domains.
6. Because in before.
7. He's in the kerosene.
8. Lies cheek by jowl.
9. Tries for the ceremonies.
11. With 47 would make an animal.
14. Bunkum, shall we say?
16. Ethiopian commander.
17. Just what these clues are meant to be.
18. Wisecracks of our ancestors.
23. Girls sometimes caged in these.
25. Seldom provides the patterns.
26. Being in Lambeth.
27. May have an effect.
32. A joint not exclusively American.
34. And here's a sinew.
36. But keep your finger out of this.
37. Pears are later in Paris.
39. As it would appear.
41. Without doubt.
47. Small portion of matter.

D	O	I	N	G	■	D	U	M	B	B	E	L	L	
I	■	N	U	A	N	C	E	■	A	I	R	Y	■	A
S	C	A	N	D	A	L	M	O	N	G	E	R	■	S
T	O	N	■	B	I	E	R	S	■	A	Y	E	S	
O	P	I	N	I	O	N	S	■	E	■	T	■	W	E
R	I	M	E	■	B	I	N	S	■	S	H	O	E	S
T	E	A	M	S	■	C	E	A	S	E	■	■	S	■
E	S	T	E	E	M	S	■	L	A	W	■	B	■	S
D	■	I	S	L	E	■	B	E	N	E	F	I	C	E
■	B	O	I	L	S	■	A	E	R	O	T	I	C	
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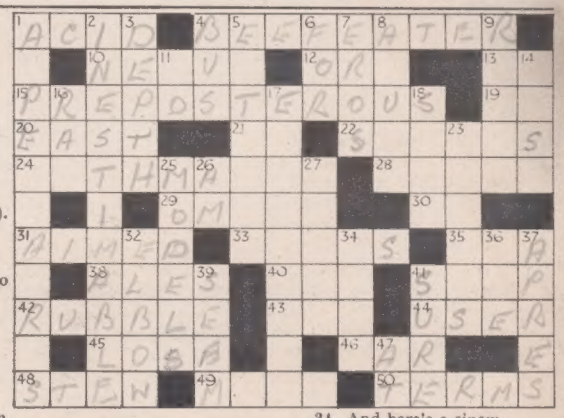
Solution to last week's puzzle.



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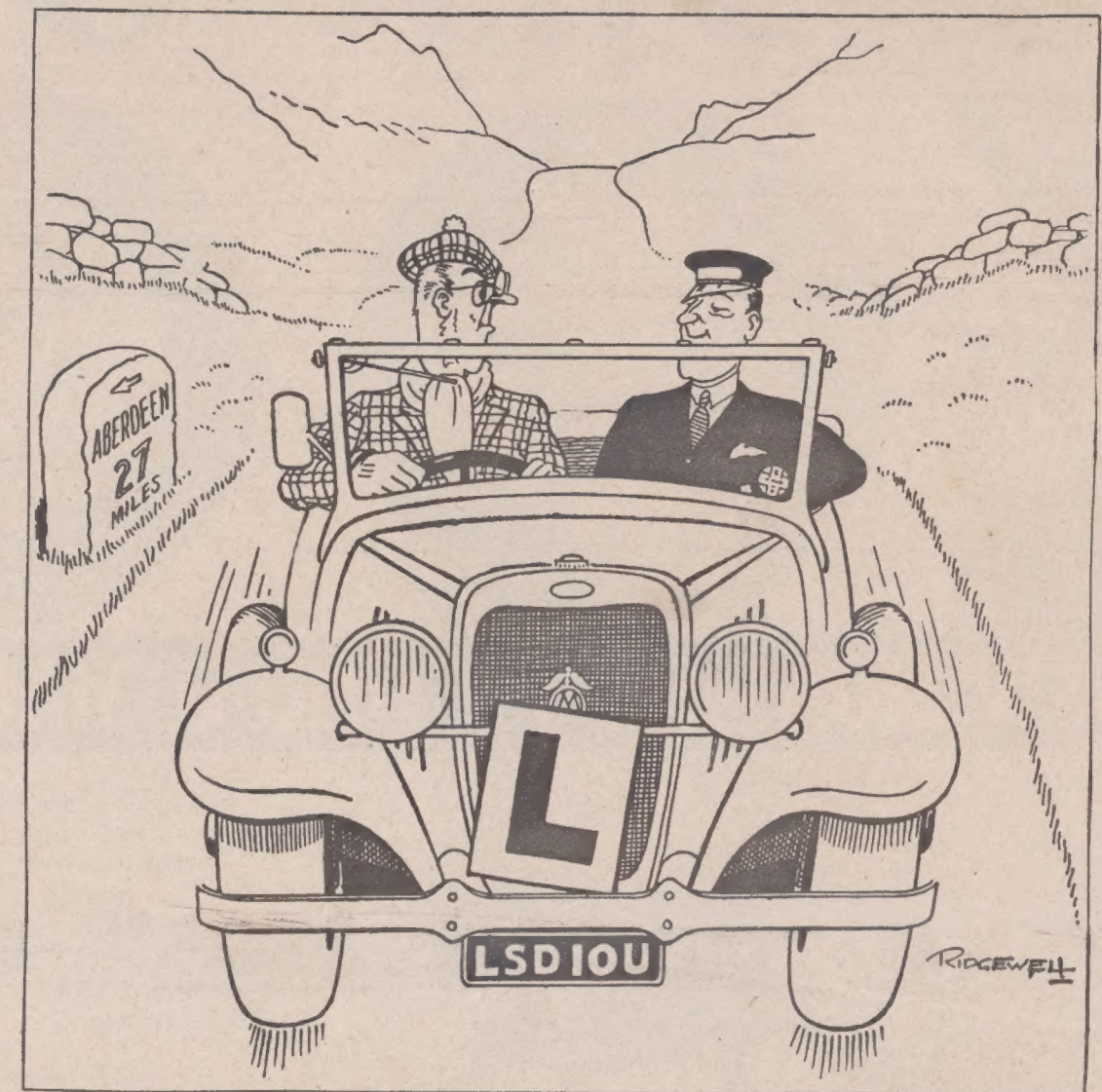

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